

## The Criticism of Phrenology as a Prelude to the Foundation of Criminal Sociology. On the Theoretical Contribution of Napoleone Colajanni

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**ABSTRACT:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Napoleone Colajanni laid the foundations of his criminal sociology by delivering a detailed criticism of phrenology and its incongruous use by the Italian school of criminology, primarily represented by Cesare Lombroso, Enrico Ferri, and Raffaele Garofalo. Colajanni's work, which in this author's opinion is balanced and not at all pedantic, rejects the idea that the phenomenon of crime can be explained by focusing on biological, racial, and anatomical characteristics of populations or individuals. In particular, the Sicilian sociologist rejects the idea of the presumed moral inferiority of Southern Italians, claimed by disciples of the Lombrosian School. Following the postulates of the nascent sociological paradigm, Colajanni emphasizes instead the primacy of the social and economic determinants of crime. However, the time was not ripe for his doctrinal approach. Due to the ostracism imposed by the School of Criminal Anthropology, then in a dominant position in the Italian scientific environment, his works remained marginal. Retrospectively, we can recognize that he was ahead of his time.

**KEYWORDS:** Moral insanity, atavism, epilepsy, phrenology, Italian school of criminology, criminal sociology, racism

### 1. Prologue

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that scientific criminology was born in Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Still, there is no need to boast about it. The reason why so many Italian scholars dealt with criminology was "Italy's sad primacy" among European nations in crime rates.<sup>1</sup> It is worth emphasizing that a respectable criminological tradition already existed in the peninsula in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the Enlightenment, the Neapolitan school of Francesco Longano, Gaetano Filangeri, Antonio Grimaldi, and Mario Pagano had already acquired international fame. In addition, universally known was the "classical school" of Cesare Beccaria, who insisted on the need to reform the judiciary system, abolish torture and the death penalty, and establish a set of guarantees for the accused and the convicted based on human rights. Jeremy Bentham would later join this school and contribute to its development based on his utilitarian theory.

The contribution of Italian scholars became even more notable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the already mentioned reason. In post-unification Italy, one of the problems that worried the government and civil society the most was the rampant crime. In particular, organized crime in Southern Italy became a cause for social alarm.

New schools of thought formed, whose fame crossed the borders of the

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Davis, "Italy's Sad Primacy": *Crime and the Social Question*, in: Id., *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, Palgrave, London 1988.

Kingdom. Among them, the Italian school of criminal anthropology, or “positive school,” founded by Cesare Lombroso and his disciples, Enrico Ferri and Raffaele Garofalo, stands out for its influence. Inspired by the dictates of positivism, the school set itself the goal of overcoming the postulates of the classical school to give criminology a scientific basis.

The theories expounded by Lombroso in books such as *L'uomo bianco e l'uomo di colore* (*The White Man and Man of Color*)<sup>2</sup> and *The Criminal Man*<sup>3</sup> do not need a detailed introduction, being known even to non-specialists due to the bad reputation that still accompanies them today. The idea of providing scientific grounds to the study of crime, lawmaking, and law enforcement is Lombroso's most fruitful legacy.<sup>4</sup> However, the theories that were to give substance to this ambitious project did not survive for a long time, as they stood on the fragile foundations of racism, physiognomy, social Darwinism, and phrenology. In a nutshell, for the disciples of his Lombrosian school, the criminal was such by birth. The anatomical characteristics of the person determined his or her behavior. One could identify potential criminals by checking the features of their face and eyes, skin color, the structure and conformation of the body, and the shape of the skull. The fundamental assumption was, therefore, that the deviant person was anatomically different from the normal one. Lombroso saw in deviance a hereditary pathology, deriving from anomalies and atavisms.

To be precise, in addition to the criminal born, Lombroso also admits the existence of criminaloids, occasional criminals, criminals by passion, moral imbeciles, and criminal epileptics. Some individuals become criminals due to an alteration of their brain that completely disrupts their moral nature. The rank of insane criminals includes, for example, alcoholics, kleptomaniacs, nymphomaniacs, and child molesters. The criminaloids, habitual or not, did not have the physical characteristics of the born criminal or the insane criminal. They became so because of life circumstances and tended to commit less serious crimes.

This approach had several disturbing consequences. First of all, it was at the origin of an unjustified stigma that fell on people guilty only of having, for example, a brachycephalic skull or very long arms. Secondly, it tended to recognize the inclination to crime as a hereditary mental pathology so that the contrasting action ended up being reduced to the clinical-therapeutic approach. For this reason, psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung also showed some interest in Lombroso's theories. Finally, as the crime rate was higher in some states or regions, the approach of the Italian school of criminal anthropology also provided arguments to the theory of racial superiority and inferiority, extending the prejudice to entire ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> C. Lombroso, *L'uomo bianco e l'uomo di colore. Letture su l'origine e la varietà delle razze*, Premiata Tipografia Edit. F. Sacchetto, Padova 1871.

<sup>3</sup> C. Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London 1911. Italian edition: *L'uomo delinquente: studiato in rapporto alla antropologia, alla medicina legale e alle discipline carcerarie*, Hoepli, Milano 1876.

<sup>4</sup> S. Ferracuti, *Cesare Lombroso (1835-1907)*, in «The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry», Volume 7, Issue 1, 1996, pp. 130-149.

Criminal sociology was born as a development of this approach, thanks to the contribution of socialist scholars. First of all, one needs to mention the essay *Il delitto e la questione sociale* (*Crime and the Social Question*) by Filippo Turati, which appeared in 1883<sup>5</sup>. This future socialist leader, then a 25-year-old lawyer, while following Lombroso in the general approach, considered it vital not to limit the discussion to the biological determinants of crime. He agreed with Lombroso that “free will is a story for little girls”<sup>6</sup> but insisted that delinquency derives mainly from social factors and economic inequality. Therefore it is eliminable. It is worth noticing that the classical school already underlined the importance of “general prevention” by means of deterrence, while the anthropological school introduced the idea of “special prevention” focused on risk groups. In other words, it was not in question that governments should prevent, and not only repress, crime. Yet, the sociological school introduced the idea that reducing poverty and giving impulse to the education of the masses could more effectively prevent crime.

Another Lombrosian scholar, Enrico Ferri, agreed on the necessity of taking into account the social determinants of crime. Still, he partly disagreed with Turati. In the essay *Socialismo e criminalità* (*Socialism and Criminality*),<sup>7</sup> which appeared in 1883, he writes that not even the establishment of a just society could erase crime completely. Ferri reportedly states that this view collides with the “ideas of criminal sociology.”<sup>8</sup> He thus introduces the name of the discipline. The following year, Ferri publishes a book explicitly entitled *Sociologia criminale* (*Criminal Sociology*).<sup>9</sup> It is a work that would later be translated into English and published in many editions.<sup>10</sup> No surprise that he is seen as the founder of criminal sociology.<sup>11</sup>

Less known is a book that came out the same year and bears a similar title: *Il socialismo e la sociologia criminale* (*Socialism and Criminal Sociology*) by Napoleone Colajanni. The first volume of the work, which was entitled *Il socialismo*, appeared in 1884<sup>12</sup>. Five years later, two other volumes entitled *La sociologia criminale* would see the light<sup>13</sup>.

It is worth dwelling on this work for two main reasons. The first is that it is less known than those by Lombroso, Turati, and Ferri. For example, in the history of criminology by Michele Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*,<sup>14</sup> the Italian positive

<sup>5</sup> F. Turati, *Il delitto e la questione sociale. Appunti sulla questione penale*, Unione autori, Milano 1883.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> E. Ferri, *Socialismo e criminalità*, Fratelli Bocca, Roma Torino Firenze 1883.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> E. Ferri, *Sociologia criminale*, Casa editrice italiana, Roma, 1884.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, in London by Fisher Unwin in 1895 and New York by Appleton & Company in 1896.

<sup>11</sup> R. Bisi, *Enrico Ferri e gli studi sulla criminalità*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2004, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> N. Colajanni, *Il Socialismo. Appunti del Dr. Napoleone Colajanni*, Filippo Tropea Editore, Catania 1884.

<sup>13</sup> N. Colajanni, *La Sociologia criminale, I & II, Appunti del Dr. Napoleone Colajanni*, Filippo Tropea Editore, Catania 1889.

<sup>14</sup> M. Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment. A Comparative History of Criminology and Penology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

school finds ample space, but there is no mention of Colajanni. In the well-known treatise of *Comparative Criminology* by Hermann Mannheim<sup>15</sup>, once again, there is much talk of Lombroso and Ferri, but not a single line about Colajanni. The same applies to the collective historical book *Pioneers in Criminology*, also edited by Mannheim<sup>16</sup>. While the Lombrosian School is, as usual, amply discussed, none of the authors mention Colajanni. It goes a little better with *The Handbook of the History and Philosophy of Criminology* edited by Ruth Ann Triplett, where Colajanni has at least one mention. Paul Knepper provides the citation in the essay *Laughing at Lombroso*, by writing the following: “Italian socialists — Turati, Colajanni, and Battaglia— published a series of pamphlets in 1882–1884 arguing that crime was an exclusively social phenomenon.”<sup>17</sup>

The fact that a scientific contribution is not universally recognized is, of course, not a sufficient reason to give it visibility. Indeed, this could be an argument against the need for its revival. Here, however, our second reason intervenes. Colajanni deserves to be remembered and studied not only because he emphasizes the need to make room for social factors in criminal etiology. More importantly, he tries to free criminology from Lombroso’s ideas. Unlike Turati and Ferri, Colajanni takes the trouble to examine in detail and criticize the theoretical assumptions from which the rival school starts. In particular, he devotes many pages to the discussion of racist, phrenological, and physiognomic theories. If one considers the sinister events of the twentieth century, Colajanni appears more ahead of his time than his academic colleagues, to the point that much of what he wrote is still sound today. On the contrary, whoever writes today as a Lombrosian would appear anachronistic. The circumstance that he went against the most illustrious criminologist of the time did not help to spread his ideas. He opposed a scientist considered to be literally “indisputable.”<sup>18</sup> If we accept the thesis of the relevance of Colajanni’s ideas – and it will be precisely our task to prove this fact – the ostracism he had to face in life is no longer a good reason to keep him on the back burner posthumously.

In this essay, after a brief presentation of Colajanni’s biographical profile, I will present the salient points of the *pars destruens* of his work, with particular emphasis on the critique of phrenology. To provide a touchstone, I will also mention the *pars construens* of the theory, centered on the role of social factors, but with no claim of being exhaustive.

## 2. Napoleone Colajanni: a brief intellectual profile

Napoleone Colajanni (1847-1921) is known not only for his scientific contributions but also for his political commitment. He belonged to a middle-class

<sup>15</sup> H. Mannheim, *Comparative Criminology*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1965. Italian edition: *Trattato di criminologia comparata*, Einaudi, Torino 1975.

<sup>16</sup> H. Mannheim (ed.), *Pioneers in Criminology*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago 1960.

<sup>17</sup> Knepper, *Laughing at Lombroso*, in: R. A. Triplett (ed.), *The Handbook of the History and Philosophy of Criminology*, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford 2018, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> This term appears in the ironic letter sent by Turati to Lombroso on March 18th, 1887. See M. Punzo, *Filippo Turati e i corrispondenti italiani*, vol. I: 1876-1892, Manduria, Lacaita 2002.

family from Castrogiovanni (Enna), which owned sulfur mines. He spent his childhood and adolescence in the cult of national hero Giuseppe Garibaldi. As Massimo Ganci recalls,<sup>19</sup> in the spring of 1860, when he was still a boy, Colajanni ran away from home to enlist among Garibaldi's "picciotti" (boys). However, a family friend recognized him and brought him back home. He repeated his escape two years later, to participate in the battle of Aspromonte on August 29th, 1862, in the ranks of the battalion commanded by Menotti Garibaldi, son of Giuseppe. Taken prisoner by the Marquis Emilio Pallavicini of Priola, he was confined to the island of Palmaria. In 1866 he enlisted again as a volunteer. Under the 3rd company of the battalion of the Genoese carabinieri, Colajanni participated in the clashes of Monte Mario (July 16th) and Bezzecca (July 21st). For having fought with Garibaldi, he was honored with a silver medal for valor.

As for institutional political commitments, Colajanni began his career as a city councilor in his hometown in 1872. Then he was elected provincial councilor in 1882 and deputy of the Kingdom of Italy in 1890. He sat in Parliament among republicans and socialists. He was a strong opponent of Crispi's autocratic tendencies and distinguished himself by denouncing the Banca Romana scandal. As Ganci notes, "the period 1894-1900 marked the accentuation of Colajanni's detachment from Italian socialism. He rejected the equation the idea of the equivalence of socialism and Marxism and proposed a rather eclectic alternative conception, the components of which ranged from Mazzinian spiritualism to social Darwinism and Sorelianism..."<sup>20</sup> At the end of the First World War, Colajanni approached fascism. Like other politicians and intellectuals of his time (many liberals and Catholics would join Mussolini's National List in 1924), Colajanni saw in the fascist movement the extreme defense against Bolshevism. While openly reprimanding the violence to which fascists often resorted, he provided them with a political and historical justification.

His academic career developed in a close relationship with political engagement. After participating in the wars of independence, Colajanni moved to Genoa to obtain a high school diploma. Subsequently, he enrolled in the faculty of medicine, first at the University of Genoa and then at the University of Naples. When he was a student, in 1869, he participated in a republican conspiracy and ended up in jail. "After nine-month detention, Colajanni was able to enjoy the amnesty, granted on November 17th, on the occasion of the birth of the crown prince Vittorio Emanuele. Back to his studies, he graduated in medicine in 1871, and then embarked as a doctor on a ship bound for South America."<sup>21</sup>

After returning to Italy, Colajanni retired to his hometown Castrogiovanni, where he practiced medicine and participated in the management of his mother's mines. He then obtained the right to teach statistics at the University of Palermo. In 1891, he took up teaching at the University of Naples, where he had studied. His research dealt in particular with crime, its statistical impact, and its long-lasting

<sup>19</sup> M. Ganci, Colajanni, Napoleone, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* - Volume 26 (1982). Retrieved from [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/napoleone-colajanni\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/napoleone-colajanni_(Dizionario-Biografico)).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

causes. Colajanni engaged in politics as a consequence of his interest in criminality. Having concluded that the main determinants of crime are of a social nature, he espoused the socialist cause. As his political and scientific commitments are not sharply distinguishable, today one would say that Colajanni practiced “engaged sociology.”

Our attention will mainly focus on the aforementioned three-volume work *Socialism and Criminal Sociology*, but many other books of his probe criminological themes and, in particular, the issue of organized crime in Southern Italy.

Colajanni died in Castrogiovanni on September 2nd, 1921, after the split of the Italian Socialist Party at its XVII Congress in Livorno, and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy, which he openly opposed. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* is keen to emphasize that, in the course of his life, he “has fought all forms of intolerance and hypocrisy.”<sup>22</sup>

### 3. The Criticism of Phrenology

Colajanni, however politically committed, embodies the spirit of the detached and impartial academic. He does not offer sterile invectives but rigorous and intellectually honest analyzes. At the risk of making less clear and crystalline his position, he is always ready to recognize what is correct in the works of his adversaries.

For example, he does not hesitate to recognize that the main merit of Cesare Lombroso and the positive Italian school of criminal law is having laid the foundations for a scientific study of crime. Colajanni, however, does not fail to clarify that the postulates of this school are currently useless. One can use them neither as a means of preventing crimes nor as a means of finding the perpetrators of a crime. However, he does not contest the scientific importance of these studies. The contempt is unjustified when it comes from jurists who interpret the use of biological, medical, and anthropological explanations as an undue invasion of their territory.

According to the Sicilian scholar, the fact that criminal anthropology has no practical use at the moment does not mean that it cannot have it in the future. The data collected by anthropologists can indeed serve to corroborate very different hypotheses on the nature of crime.

In other words, by doing research in the wake of positivist thought and having completed medical studies, the author shares Garofalo’s criticism of traditional jurists who do not scientifically investigate the criminal phenomenon. However, he saves Gian Domenico Romagnosi from this criticism because long before the eminent jurist “had brilliant intuitions.”<sup>23</sup>

Colajanni notes that, in its evolution, criminal anthropology has hinged on three alleged scientific theories: the physiognomic, the phrenological, and the degenerative. Based on the first theory, specific physical features or the overall physiognomy are seen as external imprints of the moral character of an individ-

<sup>22</sup> Colajanni, *Napoleone*, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 30, 1922. Retrieved from [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1922\\_Encyclopædia\\_Britannica/Colajanni,\\_Napoleone](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1922_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Colajanni,_Napoleone).

<sup>23</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, vol. I, cit., p. 70.

ual. Based on the second theory, potential criminals are identified by observing a complex of signs and degenerative characters and by assuming a correspondence between a specific configuration of the skull and individual parts of the brain. Finally, based on the third one, the characteristics of the delinquent are sought in the signs of degeneration or involution. Put it simply, according to this theory, the key to identifying criminals is their resemblance to evolutionary ancestors, inferior races, or animals.

Colajanni does not doubt that there is a close link between physiology and states of consciousness. He rejects the idea of the human as a purely spiritual and moral being, frequently found in religions. He lists a long series of studies showing how the state of consciousness can be altered by changes in the physiological functions of the brain, for example, by acting on the supply of blood or oxygen or through the intake of drugs. However, he is skeptical about physiognomics, phrenology, and the theory of atavistic involution.

As for phrenology, which is the topic that interests us most closely, Colajanni shows to know the subject well. He summarizes and analyzes in detail the theory developed by German doctors Franz Joseph Gall<sup>24</sup> and Johann Gaspar Spurzheim.<sup>25</sup> He sums up the fundamental principles of phrenology in the following three propositions: “1° - Our moral and intellectual faculties depend on our organization and not on some principle situated outside it; 2° - These faculties are located in the brain; 3° - In the brain there are many distinct organs with different functions.”<sup>26</sup> He also underlines that Gall and Spurzheim see the brain as tightly surrounded by the bones of the skull and, as it grows, forces them to take recognizable shapes.

Colajanni makes it clear that the reaction of the scientific community towards the theory of cerebral localizations has not been unanimous, even if the critical voices prevail. He cites, for example, Flourens and Herfirweg, who, on the basis of their own and others' experiments and observations, strongly argue that all parts of the brain are equal in their function.

The Sicilian sociologist clarifies that the controversy is not yet resolved and lists several scholars who still support the theory of localization. For example, Fritsch, Hitzig, and Ferrier deny the functional homogeneity of the brain and insist on the validity of the localization theory based on numerous and ingenious new experiments. The author still records a controversy between two German physiologists, Friedrich Goltz from Strasbourg and professor Münk from Berlin, who, while choosing the path of moderation, take sides respectively for functional homogeneity and phrenological theory.

Colajanni explains that Goltz was not at all able to refute Münk's theses. “On the contrary, with the high competence and the rare sincerity that characterizes him, it can be said that he has come to partially confirm it. Indeed, he is forced

<sup>24</sup> To be precise, Gall was a German scholar of Italian origins. His grandfather changed his surname Gallo into Gall to integrate in German society.

<sup>25</sup> F. J. Gall - J. G. Surzheim, *Outlines of the Physiognomical System*, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, London 1815.

<sup>26</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, Vol. I, p. 111.

to admit that the alterations of language seem intimately linked to the lesion of the 3rd left frontal gyrus known as Broca's. The aphasia in these lesions was explained by the fact that, in this region, the fibers and cells of association prevail, arguing that speech is a product of complicated processes of psychological association and physiological coordination.<sup>27</sup>

He admits that even the studies on partial epilepsy derived from the irritation of the cortical layer go in this direction. It is quite proven that the cerebellum, while not having an exclusively motor or sensory function, coordinates movements. Furthermore, the sense of sight seems to have its localization in the occipital lobe. Experiments by Goltz and his disciple Loeb, who also criticize the phrenological approach, would confirm this circumstance. Concessions are also made as regards the localization of the sense of hearing on the temporal lobe.

In short, according to the proponents of functional homogeneity, phrenologists are wrong, but not across the board. Whether spiritual phenomena, such as intelligence, conscience, memory, will, and moral sense, can also be localized is a much more problematic issue.

Colajanni shows that phrenologists themselves doubt that intelligence, understood as the totality of spiritual faculties conceived and logically conducted by thought, is located in a part of the brain. In short, if holists retreat from some well-conceived experiment on the localization of sensory or motor functions, phrenologists retreat when it comes to more far-reaching spiritual phenomena.

The author reports the opinion of neurologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, for whom it is absurd to consider reason, feelings, and will as particular faculties of the soul, following the metaphysicians, as well as trying to establish the localization of these functions in the manner of the phrenologists, simply because the psychic life is one and indivisible.

Commenting on this opinion, Colajanni writes: "Now, although swearing in *verba magistri* is not very commendable, one cannot but remain convinced of the accuracy of this way of seeing."<sup>28</sup> After all, phrenologists themselves agree on the fact that all theories of intelligence are premature.

The author broadens the discussion to the psychic phenomenon that is central to his scientific interest, that of the moral sense, as it is directly related to the problem of criminality. He points out that "the uncertainties and darkness that so far we have seen reigning supreme over the theory of cerebral localizations, certainly cannot disappear in the search for the location of moral character, which must follow that for the location of intelligence."<sup>29</sup>

In this regard, the Sicilian scholar emphasizes the centrality of the phenomenon of inhibition. To act under the morals and laws of their time and place, individuals must impose restraints on their instincts and desires. The author notes that we appreciate individuals for their ability to dominate themselves and inhibit spontaneous reactions. He also points out that the capacity for self-control is not

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.



innate, congenital, given. Albeit to a different extent, we all learn to keep “animal” impulses under control thanks to exercise and education.

As a demonstration of the fact that inhibition does not depend only on a spiritual predisposition, the Sicilian scholar brings up the argument of the artificial alteration of this faculty. When someone takes alcohol or drugs, one’s degree of inhibition decreases, to the point that one engages in unusual and sometimes embarrassing behaviors, of which one is often ashamed after recovering from the intoxication.

However, the anti-inhibitory effect of alcoholic poisoning does not demonstrate the existence of a localized center of inhibition. Colajanni shows that experiments focused on the removal of brain parts in dogs do not give univocal results in regards to character dispositions such as aggression, meekness, sadness, and gaiety.

The conclusion reached by Colajanni based on his literature review is that the degrees of probability that phrenologists are right “are decreasing for the theory coming down from the localization of motor functions to general sensitivity, special senses, intelligence, inhibition, and morality. Having reached this extreme of the chain, one can assume that, if not at *zero*, we are at the *minimum* possible of evidence in favor of the localization of the moral sense.”<sup>30</sup>

Colajanni then reviews a whole series of studies that completely deny the validity of phrenology. A long list of clinical cases shows that many individuals with severely injured brains behaved similarly as before. Everything suggests that other parts of the brain have remedied the absence or degeneration of large portions of it.

The Sicilian sociologist once again points out that the members of the two schools often and willingly make concessions to their opponents, which only increases the uncertainty surrounding the problem. These are his words: “Now these strange contradictions, if they testify for the scientific sincerity of their authors, do they not increase at the same time the darkness which surrounds the theory of localization and brain functions?”<sup>31</sup> He also notes: “We are always dealing with extremely expert physiologists and psychologists, on whose competence and honesty it is not possible to raise suspicions and, ultimately, not subjected to the influence of any metaphysical or religious prejudice!”<sup>32</sup>

It goes without saying that this observation also applies to Colajanni. Indeed, he shows the same caution, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness that grants to the authors he reads.

Colajanni tries to mediate between the two positions on the field by formulating his own hypothesis. Some functions can be guaranteed by different parts of the brain, according to the principle of substitution (*supplenza*). However, it is not true that the brain makes a virtue of necessity in all situations. Some parts of the brain have specialized, and some functions have localized. These developments depend on the degree of evolution of the whole organism. “The hypothesis will

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 128.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 134.

be complete assuming that the moral sense is lost more easily because it has not yet been localized; and it has not been localized or fixed because it has been acquired for a short time.”<sup>33</sup>

In other words, even if one concedes that the psychic function has an anatomical basis, that is, that the character of the individual ultimately depends on the diversity of the nerve cells and their different arrangement in the brain, it is difficult to say which modification of the cells can produce a specific change in behavior. At the present state of knowledge – Colajanni says – we do not know what alterations and modifications determine moral or immoral behavior. What alterations lead a man to commit a crime? Nerve cells can change in terms of volume, number, arrangement, grouping, polarity, chemical composition, electrical state, etc.

Colajanni wonders if there is still a need to dwell on the theory of the correspondence between the shape of the brain and the external shape of the skull, once it is clear that the localization theory itself does not hold water. To give the deathblow to craniology, the Sicilian sociologist recalls the study of the artificial deformations of the skull in use by some extra-European populations. Indeed, this custom clearly shows that there is no correspondence between the external skull's prominences and the superficial protrusions of the brain. At this point, Colajanni issues the final verdict: “And with this, the building of phrenology collapses.”<sup>34</sup>

As Socrates taught, a profession of learned ignorance certifies the scholar's wisdom. Colajanni admits it candidly: “Ignoramus! Here is the greatest truth.”<sup>35</sup> Still, he insists that the admission of ignorance does not imply surrendering to mystery. “Ignoramus! Let's repeat this sad truth but not to make us portrayed disheartened by the fight against the unknown.” Colajanni still hopes that the unknown of today will become known tomorrow. By trials and errors, researchers will once and for all manage to take the straight path. He underlines that this is “the sound doctrine of Italian positivism.”<sup>36</sup>

While believing them to be wrong, Colajanni does not fail to grant the honor of arms to Lombroso and his disciples. Indeed, he affirms that they will remain “commendable examples of inexhaustible activity and generous daring.”<sup>37</sup> In short, he recognizes that even mistakes, false starts, negative results are of some use for the advancement of science.

#### 4. The criticism of Criminal Anthropology

In the following chapters of the book, Colajanni turns his attention from phrenology to criminal anthropology. He affirms once again that it is not his intention to support the approach of the classical school, as criminological discourse can no longer ignore the biological sciences. He adds that this postulate is now widely accepted by sociologists. We should not forget that, at the time, the polar

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 149.

star of sociology is Herbert Spencer, and not yet Emile Durkheim. Sociological theory is almost synonymous with evolutionism.

Granted that, Colajanni points out once again that the biological theories used by the Italian positive school are fallacious. According to him, “the conclusions of the examination undertaken are disheartening.”<sup>38</sup> The relationship between phrenology and criminal anthropology “closely resembles the biblical parable of the blind man who wants to lead another blind man.”<sup>39</sup>

Before providing his criticism, the Sicilian sociologist feels the duty to demonstrate that not a few authors still try to base criminal anthropology on phrenology. He reports a series of quotations taken from the works of Drill, G. Sergi, Ferri, Morselli, M. Benedikt, Marro, Golgi, Mondini, Virgilio, and others. When one states that brachycephalics are ready for anger and violent reactions and, therefore, prone to bloody crimes, “aren’t we in the thick of phrenology?”<sup>40</sup>

Quite curiously, up to this point of the discussion, Colajanni did not quote sentences taken directly from Lombroso’s works. He seems hesitant to take this step. He writes: “I do not recall such explicit and clearly formulated statements by Cesare Lombroso.”<sup>41</sup> Is, indeed, the master more cautious than his disciples? Moving on, the Sicilian sociologist becomes less tactful. He clearly states that phrenology merges in Lombroso’s theory, at least in the French edition of his *Criminal Man*. After having exposed the disciples’ works, he eventually tackles Lombroso’s research, offering detailed references with page numbers.

Intelligence and feelings, although in a doubtful form, are put in relation to the capacity and shape of the skull (page 184); he mentions the locations more clearly at the end of the volume, and indeed the various forms of criminality and madness are put in relation to the various lesions of the regions of the organism, especially of the cortical centers (p. 659) after having repeatedly affirmed in a general way the disposition to psycho-moral alterations as a consequence of the weakening of the organs, which offer a *locus minoris resistentiae* (p. 461); Jackson’s Gowers hypothesis on the genesis of epilepsy was accepted (p. 624) and [Lombroso] affirmed with a truly surprising certainty the localization in the anterior lobes of the brain of the still very obscure and indeterminate faculty of inhibition. (p. 627).<sup>42</sup>

Colajanni then examines a work by Giulio Fioretti, an eloquent lawyer, not very competent in medicine and biology, but with the enthusiasm of a neophyte. In the essay *Polemica in difesa della scuola criminale positiva* (*Polemics in defense of the positive criminal school*)<sup>43</sup>, Fioretti abandons all caution and, therefore, his speech is particu-

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 151.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 152.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> C. Lombroso - E. Ferri - R. Garofalo - G. Fioretti, *Polemica in difesa della scuola criminale positiva*, Zanichelli, Bologna 1886.

larly instructive. The young lawyer bases criminal anthropology on phrenology without hesitation. As an example, here is one quotation: “From the influence of circulation on brain activity, it follows as an undeniable fact that the way in which cerebral tissue irrigation is carried out has a powerful influence on the moral character of an individual. Therefore, the very great importance of heart diseases, circulation disorders, etc., etc. [are] all things that Criminal Anthropology studies carefully, limiting itself to a morphological examination of the skull.”<sup>44</sup>

Can Fioretti be considered an extreme case within the positive criminal school? Colajanni notes that the plea in favor of phrenological theories appears in a book co-authored with Lombroso, Ferri, and Garofalo. He admits, however, that Garofalo pours oil on troubled waters. Indeed, he shows commendable caution when asking: “What is the relationship between a particular structure of the skull and an abnormal psychic organization? And he answers: It is currently a mystery. We must limit ourselves to establishing the facts.”<sup>45</sup>

Yet, despite the calls for prudence, the admissions of ignorance, the acknowledgment of the hypothetical character of the biological theory on which criminology stands, clear indications are still provided on how to recognize potential offenders by examining their physical characteristics only.

Colajanni shows that, for Lombroso, the criminal man differs from the normal and honest man due to the exclusive presence or greater frequency of bodily features. One should identify the potential criminal by paying attention to the following features: superciliary arches and prominent frontal sinuses; great thickness of the bones and osteoporosis; abnormalities in the development of wisdom teeth; pathological skull; partial or complete sealing of the sutures, receding forehead; Wormian bones; abnormal skull; very simple frontal sutures; swelling of the frontal bone; median occipital fossa; plagiocephaly and asymmetry; the permanence of the mid-frontal suture; scalloped or symbolic sutures; large or small cranial capacity; osteophytes of the clivus; trochocephaly; thin skull bones; small, narrow or flattened forehead; exaggeration of the roundness or obliquity of the foramen magnum; traces of traumatic injuries; abnormalities in the development of canine teeth; oxycephaly; bone of the Incas; sub-scapocephaly; overlapping of the bones of the skull; osteomas of the petrous and occipital bones; and the prominence of the occipital protuberance.

The Sicilian sociologist takes the trouble to analyze and question, one after the other, all the associations proposed by Lombroso. He thus removes the cornerstone from the edifice of criminal anthropology, namely the idea that criminality can be explained as a sort of involution, or regression to an earlier stage of the evolutionary process, distinguishing “human and pre-human atavistic characters according to whether the reversion occurs towards those of human races and animals.”<sup>46</sup>

Colajanni is keen to point out that he is not alone in this battle. He em-

<sup>44</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, Vol. I, cit., p. 155.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 165.

phasizes that the opposition to these theories does not come only from jurists. Outstanding anatomists and anthropologists such as Topinard, Monti, Giacomini, and Mantegazza reject them. Furthermore, he shows that the followers of the Lombrosian school themselves are hesitant. Not infrequently, they back down or provide arguments that invalidate their own theory.

The Sicilian sociologist quotes Lombroso against Lombroso: “I knew, says the writer, three individuals with ALL the physical and psychological characteristics of the criminal born, but whose high social position defended from prison. They themselves confessed: if we weren’t rich, we would have engaged in theft.”<sup>247</sup> In short, to support his theory, Lombroso unwittingly ends up agreeing with those arguing that the decisive cause of crime is social, while biological factors - if they play any role - can only predispose to certain behaviors. Colajanni’s ironic comment is the following: “It is Cesare Lombroso who speaks, and you can trust him!”<sup>248</sup>

In other words, the characteristics of the delinquent have “an uncertain value, very relative, almost null, unless the social factors - so despised by the school - come to determine, to carry out the latent natural disposition to commit a crime.”<sup>249</sup> The sociologist shows that this fact is recognized, albeit grudgingly, also by Marro, Benedikt, Lombroso, Kraepelin, Ferri, and Lacassagne. However, we must not give them great credit - Colajanni adds - as the founder of phrenology himself anticipated them long before.

If the same disciples of the school retreat, while their opponents demolish the building of criminal anthropology piece by piece, can we perhaps conclude that Colajanni’s contribution is a mere literature review?

Drawing this conclusion would be incorrect. The author contributes originally and substantially by putting in place his skills in the field of statistics. In addition to being a teacher of this subject, a few years later, he would write handbooks of statistics.<sup>50</sup> It is not surprising then that his refutation of the anthropological approach is all in the numbers. Not only does he note that adequate statistical data to support the Lombrosian theory are lacking. He also points out that numbers, when available, are not interpreted correctly. To give just one example, the members of the school compared a certain number of skulls of criminals to those of 1320 soldiers who died during the battle of Solferino. In addition to the fact that the two samples were numerically different, and this already invalidates the comparison, a further methodological error was the choice of the reference sample itself. Soldiers do not represent a “normal” population. They are a rigorously selected population. From the ranks of the army, during the enlistment phase, are excluded all the men affected by “hernias, rickets, scrofulosis, tuberculosis, epilepsy, goiters, cretinism, varicosis, and [...] by profound degenerative characters, which therefore one cannot notice in them.”<sup>251</sup>

Moreover, despite the use of inadequate samples and *ad hoc* methodologies

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>50</sup> N. Colajanni, *Manuale di statistica teorica*, Luigi Pierro Editore, Napoli 1904.

<sup>51</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, Vol. I, cit., p. 192.

that favor the Lombrosian theory, the differences in behavior between supposedly born delinquents and normal men are minimal at a statistical level. In other words, the theory is weak at any rate.

Colajanni also disputes the classification of delinquents proposed by the school of criminal anthropology. According to Ferri, offenders are of five categories: criminal born, passionate criminal, occasional criminal, habitual criminal, and insane criminal. The latter - as the Sicilian sociologist specifies - "is anthropologically identical to the criminal born, as in the cases of madness and moral imbecility and a large number of cases of epilepsy; or it differs from it, if not because of the fundamental genesis of degeneration, then at least due to the intellectual disorder."<sup>52</sup>

According to the author, this classification needs revision. Not without a touch of provocation, he asks why has the "political criminal" been excluded from the typology. It is a category that puts the whole Lombrosian anthropological approach at risk. In an era of revolutions, the most progressive and intellectually brilliant spirits commit crimes against the established order. Revolutionary leaders are anything but convoluted human beings similar to the Neanderthal or even the beast. National heroes, champions of freedom and democracy, religious reformers, and social revolutionists had to break the law to allow humanity to take a step forward in the march of progress and social evolution. Doesn't all this mean that sometimes it is the law that makes the criminal, rather than preventing crime?

It is a problem that a Garibaldian like Colajanni could not fail to raise. It is an uncomfortable case that undermines Lombroso's idea of a "criminal man" and advocates in favor of Turati's idea of a "criminal government." The political criminal "occupies a very special position for his self-denial, for his noble intentions, for his altruism."<sup>53</sup> The contrast is striking "between the severity and sometimes the iniquity of the law that punishes the political criminal and the consideration in which he is held and the admiration which is granted to him by contemporaries or posterity."<sup>54</sup> Not surprisingly, Benedikt classifies the political criminal as a "descendant of *homo nobilis*."

Colajanni proposes a further significant change to Ferri's criminal typology, namely the outright removal of the insane criminal from the sociological classification. For the classical school of criminology, the mentally ill – insofar as he/she was incapable of understanding and willing – was not punishable by law. By definition, the madman was not a criminal but a sick person. The judge would let the administrative authority to order the hospitalization of the insane offender or his/her return to the family of origin. Lombroso and his school insisted on the necessity to protect the community from violent madmen by creating institutions in between mental hospitals and prisons. Judges could confine mentally ill and dangerous individuals in criminal asylums (or judicial psychiatric hospitals). These mid-way institutions still exist today. A time of confinement is not established in

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 375.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 381.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 381.

advance, as it occurs for the offender capable of understanding and willing. The insane person remains separated from society, treated by medical and paramedical personnel, and guarded by security personnel, as long as the state of mental illness associated with social dangerousness persists.

Colajanni writes that the criminal madman is “another special type that psychiatry more appropriately deals with, and which could rightfully disappear from a sociological classification.”<sup>55</sup> So, he does not deny the fact that insane offenders exist and need special treatment. Still, he clarifies that it is not the job of the sociologist to decide who is sane and who is not. Sociologists do not study incomprehensible crimes, which not even offenders are sometimes able to explain, but understandable ones. For example, they study the behavior of those who steal out of hunger. As no sociologist would today claim competence in the field of psychiatry, with this move, Colajanni shows his modernity when compared to disciples of the anthropological school.

### 5. The criticism of racism

When moving from *the pars destruens* to the *pars construens*, Colajanni strives to highlight above all the role of social factors in criminal etiology.

For example, turning his gaze to Ireland, he underlines the relationship between the economic factor and crime against the person. The excitement of souls produced by movements such as *The Irish Home Rule* and *The Irish National Land League* are not the causes of the frequent and mysterious murders of landowners. The first was a movement that campaigned for self-government (or “home rule”) for Ireland within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The second was an Irish political organization of the late 19th century, which sought to help poor tenant farmers. Conservatives often accused social movements of fomenting riots and murders, so much so that Ferri has to clarify that his book *Socialism and Crime* does not intend to causally link the two phenomena, as the title may suggest.

According to Colajanni, “Ireland’s periodic murders have a deeper and simpler cause; they all derive from the vicious distribution of property, and consequently from the poverty of the peasant and the frequency of famine.”<sup>56</sup>

The Sicilian scholar also stresses the positive things done by the members of the Lombrosian school. He admits that, in *Socialism and Crime*, Ferri has already emphasized the importance of social factors, alongside physical and anthropological ones.

Among the factors already highlighted by Ferri are the following ones: population increase; emigration; public opinion; educational customs; political, financial, and commercial aspects; agricultural and industrial production; administrative order; public education; public charity; public security; and civil and criminal justice systems.

Once again, Colajanni proposes revisions. He claims that profession, social

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 382.

<sup>56</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, vol. II, cit., p. 525.

class, and education are social factors, while Ferri had put them among the anthropological ones. As one can see, what appears to be a mere nominalist issue takes instead on a considerable theoretical significance. As we have repeated many times, the central assumption of the positive criminal school is that anthropological factors occupy a privileged position, while social factors are deemed to have only a marginal role. But if Lombroso's disciples put the most important social factors among the anthropological ones, the substantive situation looks different. That is why Colajanni does not throw into the graveyard of misconceptions the whole work done by the Lombrosians. He rejects some patently wrong ideas and then put the puzzle of the remaining ideas back together in a different way.

Colajanni corrects Ferri also for having put the race of offenders among physical factors instead of anthropological ones. When it comes to talking about the criminogenic role of racial pedigree, the Sicilian sociologist shows little inclination to compromise. Racism is treated as a wrong idea *tout court*, being contradicted by massive statistical data. It can certainly happen that a group belonging to a "race" is more prone to crime, at least in a specific historical period and geographical place. However, if other groups belonging to the same ethnicity do not show a similar predisposition, criminal etiology must turn the attention to social and cultural factors.

Colajanni shows that the list of scholars who link moral vice to racial determinants is very long. For example, Lombroso describes the gypsies as a criminal race. The author then reports a statement by Georges Vacher de Lapouge that, in light of what happened in the Twentieth century, sounds somewhat sinister: "The true and only superior race to which civilization is due, he continues, is the Aryan. The other races are inferior, albeit to different degrees, imitators and non-inventors. The Negro then is only a domesticated chimpanzee, a talking chimpanzee, of which Christian and anti-Christian ideologues have wrongly wanted to make a man, while he was born to be a slave and not susceptible to civilization."<sup>57</sup>

And, again, Colajanni notes that "in contempt of all the statistical and historical results of today, animated by religious fanaticism and economic interests, which are the trappings of it, the Catholic Drumont exalts the merits of the Aryans and describes in black colors the vices of the Semites, succeeding in the conclusion that only the first possess the notion of justice, the sentiment of freedom, the conception of beauty!"<sup>58</sup>

The author emphasizes the fact that Drumont is a Catholic author because, at the time, the Church tended to side with conservatives of all kinds. Those were not the years of Pius XI, who resolutely rejected any form of racism. Those were the years of Pius IX, who harshly criticized modernity, and sometimes uttered openly racist invectives. For example, after the breach in Porta Pia, giving an audience to the Pious Union of Catholic Women of Rome on August 24th, 1871, he

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 206. See also: G. Vacher de Lapouge, *L'Aryen. Son rôle social*, Ancienne Librairie Thorin et Fils, Paris 1899.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 208. See also: E. Drumont, *La France Juive Essai D' Histoire Contemporaine*, C. Marpon & E. Flammarion, Paris 1883; and E. Drumont, *Socialismo cattolico*, con prefazione di Arturo Labriola, Società Editrice Partenopea, Napoli 1911.



lashed out with violence against the Jews. He defined them as children who have become “dogs,” whom “we hear barking in all the streets, and they are harassing us in all places.”<sup>59</sup> Besides, in 1866, Pius IX stated what follows:

[...] servitude itself, considered in itself and all alone (*per se et absolute*), is by no means repugnant to the natural and divine law, and there can be present very many just titles for servitude, as can be seen by consulting the approved theologians and interpreters of the canons. For the dominion which belongs to a master in respect to a slave is not to be understood as any other than the perpetual right of disposing, to one's own advantage, of servile work, which dominion it is legitimate for a person to offer to another person. From this it follows that it is not repugnant to the natural and divine law that a slave be sold, bought, exchanged, or given...<sup>60</sup>

He speaks of “servitude” and not of “slavery,” but the substance changes very little as the Pope approved the buying and selling of human beings. This conception is far from the liberal idea of wage labor and even further from the socialist one of cooperative work. It is worth noticing that the speech was not purely speculative, as Pius IX delivered it one year after the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the United States of America.

The racism of the time, of which the school of criminal anthropology is only the ‘scientific’ expression, does not only affect Africans or Jews. Italians themselves, and in particular the southerners, were often referred to as criminal born. For Baron Raffaele Garofalo, “we must take as established... the existence of the moral sense of a race of people, created, like all the other sentiments, by evolution, and transmitted from generation to generation...”<sup>61</sup> Lombroso, for his part, tries to demonstrate that the areas of Sicily most affected by crime are those of the *Conca d’Oro*. He affirms that marauding in Sicily “is concentrated almost entirely in that famous valley of the Conca d’Oro, where the rapacious BERBER and SEMITE tribes had their first and more tenacious settlements,” and underlines the different behavior of those Sicilians who are “richer in Aryan blood.”<sup>62</sup>

These are not innocent considerations. Colajanni notes that Lapouge preaches the extermination of non-Aryans, as Garofalo preaches the extermination of criminals. That is why the author patiently dismantles racial theories, armed with statistical data. For example, after having noticed that “the part that suffered most from the Semitic influence was the province of Trapani (Reclus I. p. 552), while the preponderance of race and Hellenic civilization is in the province of Girgenti,” he shows that “the province of Trapani is one of those in Sicily, which has less crime. Girgenti instead has the maximum absolute number of murders.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> G. Miccoli, *Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo*, in *St. It. Annali*, XI, 2, *Gli ebrei in Italia. Dall’emancipazione a oggi*, edited by C. Vivanti, 1997, p. 1407.

<sup>60</sup> Pius IX, *Instruction Number 1293 of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office*, June 20, 1866.

<sup>61</sup> R. Garofalo, *Criminology*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston 1914, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> N. Colajanni, *La sociologia criminale*, vol. II, cit., p. 200.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

Colajanni then shows, statistics in hand, that Jews commit fewer crimes on average than citizens of other origins. Precisely, “their delinquency in general and especially in Europe is lower than that of the other races with which they live mixed up. In Bavaria, there would be one Jewish convict for every 315 inhabitants and one Catholic for 265.”<sup>64</sup> Their delinquency is specific, as they commit thefts, falsifications, scams, aiding and abetting crime, but with a lower frequency than that of their target population – that of traders and small businesses. Lombroso’s statements appear all the more surprising when one considers that he himself is a Jew. Colajanni then wonders with what logic he attributes “the high rate of delinquency to the rapacious Semitic tribes when it is stated, at the same time, that Jews in almost all of Europe have a lower crime rate than that of other races? Aren’t the Jews the Semites *par excellence*?”<sup>65</sup>

There is also a word in defense of the Berbers “who in the opinion of all ethnologists, historians and travelers in many parts of Africa have a very high moral sense, above the average in Europe.”<sup>66</sup>

Arriving at the tenth chapter of the second volume, Colajanni realizes that the *pars destruens* of his work far surpasses the *pars construens*. Whenever he begins a discourse, he confronts himself with the studies already completed and inexorably slips into criticism. So much so that the reader can wonder what the positive conclusions of the author are.

The Sicilian sociologist replies as follows: “Many who look at the surface could judge that the larger part of the previous study was of a negative nature,” however, one must also consider that “every negation has its positive side.” If one reads carefully can see that “the positive side repeatedly mentioned is the following: the etiology of delinquency must be sought with the most precise preference in social contingencies; crime is above all a social and historical phenomenon.”<sup>67</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

This article shows how the criticism of phrenology and criminal anthropology opened the road to the foundation of modern criminal sociology. It also shows how Napoleone Colajanni understood and helped this process. Going now into the details of the crime prevention policies developed by the Sicilian sociologist would take us too far. In other words, the detailed analysis of the *pars construens* of his work would require a separate study.

Here, it seems more useful to spend a few more words on the relevance of Colajanni’s theory. He defended ideas that would lead to his marginalization in the scientific community of his time. Those ideas were perhaps premature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, due to their moderation, were rejected by both reactionary and revolutionary fringes. Still, they were germs of truth that would develop and spread in subsequent years.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 197.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 219.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 447.

The maxim “the truth lies in the middle” applies particularly well to Colajanni’s work. Let us see just two examples. While not hiding his sympathies for republicanism and socialism, and while proposing the development of public education and more equitable distribution of wealth, Colajanni rejects the Marxist postulate that the economic factor is ultimately the decisive one. Precisely, he affirms that moral sentiments and intelligence “depend on the well-being achieved,” and, therefore, economic justice is fundamental to preventing crime. Still, it is an exaggeration to assert that “every social event - political, religious, aesthetic, moral - is the direct and exclusive product of an economic phenomenon (Marx, Loria).”<sup>68</sup>

Despite being a convinced anticlerical and while rejecting the traditional thesis that only religious faith can effectively limit immorality and crime, Colajanni does not subscribe to the idea, widespread in nineteenth-century positivist circles, that religious sentiment is fundamentally a mental illness. “According to Max Nordau, religion is an infirmity caused by the imperfection of our thinking organ. Sergi declares it as a pathological phenomenon. For Schiattarella, religion is madness.” He thinks that these theories are wrong because they underline “only the bad side of religions and did not realize that a pathological phenomenon cannot possibly be universal in time and space.”<sup>69</sup>

Colajanni is a man of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His writings must be read and understood by taking into account their communicative intentions in that historical context. In a famous controversy with other historians of ideas, Quentin Skinner insisted much on this often ignored need. However, one cannot deny that some politicians and scholars are only humans of their time, while others share broader and more universal views. *Ex post facto*, given what happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we may safely conclude that, unlike his contemporaries, Colajanni had criminological ideas destined to survive, or at least to age better.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 453.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 628.