

Reward and punishment in (post)modern society - criminological contribution to the theory of sanctioning

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When talking about rewarding, the first thought that runs through one's head is money. However, the designation "reward" includes also gratifications related to drives (or emotional dispositions), which can be classified in the semantic space of the Greek notion *thymos* (meaning in particular the need of the human animal to be noticed, recognized, accepted, appreciated or to be worthy of attention, kindness and love in a successful relationship with "important others"). An individual's perception that he/she is undeservedly or unjustly insufficiently rewarded has clear criminological implications, manifested by feelings of humiliation, shame, resentment, envy, anger, revengefulness, hate, a feeling of relative deprivation and aggressiveness. On the other hand, it is more or less clear that punishment has become in our time a considerably more difficult control activity, not least due to extremely frequent violations of norms (or because of a progressive decline of "authority", which is a socio-psychological phenomenon that is simultaneously cause and consequence of a growth of cynicism, opportunism, narcissistic "individualism", competitive struggle, distrust in principal institutions and even in people in general, an increased self-confidence of both powerful and less powerful "criminals", the striking selectivity of formal and informal agencies of sanctioning, the class nature of legal prescriptions, the normalized corruptness and greed of political and business elites, the unwillingness or incapacity of members of the judicial proletariat to exercise adequately their power and perform their heteronomous work etc.). The "crisis" of punishment often seems to contribute to quasi-judicial reactions (to subjectively perceived wrongs) in private (individual or group) arrangements and also encourages a tendency to release accumulated anger against one or other category of the handiest "scapegoats" or "good enemies".

Key words: post-modern society, punishment, reward, violation of norms, criminal justice system, social sanctions, neo-liberalism

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