

# Sociology of the Fear of Crime: A Hypothesis on the Offender's Image

## —The Persistence of Physiognomic Belief in Common Cultural Sense of Western Complex Society and Victimization

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### Abstract

Today, modern science rejects the *physiognomic belief*. Today, we know scientifically appearance is not the necessary reflection of an inner world. Modern science demonstrates inferences regarding character personality are not a genetic matter and cannot to be deduced from symmetric face features. This idea is a *fanciful* idea, a matter of pure fantasy. However, are we sure that what is true in science and mainstream culture also applies to cultural common sense? Do people trust Physiognomy despite its errors? According to my sociological hypothesis, empirical observations suggest that the physiognomic belief persists in common cultural sense in order to form judgment and decision-making processes and relationship behaviors in that peculiar sphere of social action which is the victimization sphere. I hypothesize the beauty-goodness and ugliness-badness meaning opposition means the offender conception and operates on a plane which is parallel to the dominant culture plane. This persistence confirms the *stickiness* of social change in a complex micro-macro social system who changes and self-organizes *by novelty*. In this paper, I argue evolutionary theories on Physiognomy and psycho-evolutionary theories on attractiveness stereotyping and highlight some main critical aspects. This being stated, even criminological theories emphasizing a personalization process of offender image changing from person to person are argued. In particular, I deal with the Garofalo's theory. Therefore, my hypothesis is a collective sociological hypothesis on persistence of the *physiognomic belief* in common cultural sense.

### Keywords

Fear of Crime, *Nature* and *Nurture* in Victimization Behavior, Offender

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Image, Physiognomic Belief, Attractiveness Stereotyping, Evolutionary, Psychological and Criminological Theories, Sociological-Cultural Hypothesis

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## 1. Introduction

It is an error to think that offender idea of a social group is nothing more than a sociological curiosity. Indeed, it is an interpretative criterion capable of modulating the fear of crime and adopting behavioral strategies which are useful to personal protection. Indeed, from my sociological perspective systematic empirical observations suggest a peculiar interpretative hypothesis.

Stories whose protagonists seem actors of a standardized script are not rare ones: in stereotypical terms, *naïve*, defenseless, trustful, incredulous victims of a perceived decent, above suspicion, person are recurrent. It's not uncommon for unwary elderly woman to confidently open her home door to a stranger that is well-dressed, beautiful in his face traits, trustworthiness, honest, reassuring, and instead she is robbed, deceived, deprived of her trust and even of her physical integrity. These acts are insidious and unexpected. According to victim herself, who turned out to be an offender appeared like a "good guy". Indeed, "He appeared". Faced with stories like these, the immediate reaction is to blame the naive old woman, her age and gender. But are we sure that merely her age and gender are to blame? I don't think I'm exaggerating in saying the Amanda case—the murder of Meredith Kercher—shocked everyone in Italy: Amanda Knox appeared to the collective judgment as a blonde, angelic face, gentle, graceful girl. Ordinary collective conscience didn't believe that such an angelic appearance was the "sweet container" of murderous intents. It doesn't matter that Amanda has been legally acquitted. What matters is that common collective judgment had acquitted Amanda even before the laborious and controversial acquittal. From my sociological perspective, the skepticism to the mere possibility that a criminal has features as gentle as Amanda's ones is particularly interesting (such as the Stasi case or the Cogne crime, to name just a few one. Hundreds of Italian and not Italian examples can be made). Why wasn't there the same shock in the case of the so-called Marcinelle Monster (the murderer of Elisa Claps) or the Erba couple? Unlike the cases cited above, the brutality of crimes themselves, from violation of adolescence to extermination of an entire family, was shocking, and no one surprised that the perpetrators of these atrocities were precisely them, the first being considered ferocious in his appearance and the other two being considered "fools". No, to answer the question posed a few lines before, I don't believe the blame should be attributed merely to age and gender the victims.

These facts are emblematic and even sufficient to my hypothesis. As Reichenbach says, it is still in discovery context. It is an intuitive or creative moment and it is far from a justification context (Reichenbach, 1951).

Therefore, it's certainly reasonable to assume that our *naïve* elderly woman has

no reason to be alarmed when she spontaneously decides to let into her home a young man whom she considers a “very good” and “honest” young man. It’s significant that the first consideration of a such *naïve* and unwary victim is “he appeared like such a good guy”. It suggests that the decisive assessment that leads victims to trust a stranger and open to him their home door concerns his external characteristics, his appearance, from his clothing to his physical characteristics. Likewise, the recognition of a potential harm (the perceived danger which is able to trigger a state of anxiety, namely, the fear of becoming a victim of crimes) was not sufficiently stimulated by such a “blonde” and “kind” Amanda. Ironically, if Amanda knocked on their home door, how many people would behave differently from the old lady which I have just mentioned? If Dr. Jekyll knocked on our door, would we be alarmed? If Mr. Hyde knocked on our door, would we be more defensive? And, given that Dr. Jekyll *is* Mister Hyde, how many people would pay attention to their reaction?

In my opinion, offender conception is a *collective fact* which is rooted in the long cultural tradition of physiognomic belief dating back the Greek culture and Lombroso’s criminal anthropology. Several circumstances suggest that cultural common sense preserves the concretions of the rapport between deviance and genetic factors of offenders. Indeed, *Physiognomic belief* considers that proportional external beauty is the reflection of internal, or moral goodness, and external ugliness is the tangible sign of internal amorality. As I said, this relation is based on a genetic perspective. Even today, in cultural common sense people appear to be like Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, like Homer, Shakespeare and Stevenson, like Voltaire, Lavater and Lombroso. Although science has demonstrated that errors of judgment and behavior can be attributed to Physiognomy, in common culture the criterion of the beauty-goodness and ugliness-badness meaning opposition—the organic relationship what is beautiful *is* good—continues to mean relationship processes and operate on a parallel to the dominant culture plane and the undoubted scientific progress of sociological discipline. Today, Lombroso’s theory has been seriously challenged from the modern sociology of deviance, which attributes importance to social culture or, as Durkheim said, collective conscience. However, I believe Physiognomy continues to be valid in common sense. Here, external beauty is the sign of moral goodness and trustworthiness even in the victimization sphere.

The new system conception as complex system and the stickiness of social change contribute to this hypothesis. It is inserted in this framework. Therefore, some clarifications are necessary.

Complexity reveals that the social system—social relations as well as the society as the sum of all social relations—is a *symbolically complex system*. If complexity is *essential unpredictability*, referring to deterministic but not predetermined and unpredictable changes (Prigogine & Stengers, 1979; Prigogine, 2010), social system changes, and it changes meaning and relational structures in an unexpected and unpredictable way. This condition is very important to my hypothesis. First,

there is a shift in social elements which confirms the idea of nonlinear determinism and emergence of the social system—if A then B, or C, or D (given the input, we don't know the outcome. In sociological terms, we don't know the relationship meaning and consequently social structures—values, norms, expectations—or social system) rather than linear determinism—if A then B. It demonstrates that the social system is not a static and predictable system whose changes fade out an asymptotic stability by negative feedback dampening inputs and returning the system to its previous state. Instead, it changes, and changes in an unpredictable way, by positive feedback and circular, reciprocal, environment-system relationship. This progressive semantic and communicative-relational transformation shows the temporalized complexity of social system whose elements of meaning and relationality are momentary. And it shows emergent capacity of social system, which is unpredictable with respect to individuals' ability of give meaning to world, in the interdependence between systemic disintegration process and reproduction process. This relational-organizational transformation is a clear sign of the social system's *restlessness*, of its instability and innovation. And it is the sign of a change in meaning and relationality which is due to the micro-macro-micro social relationship. It undermines the macro-micro Spencerian and Parsonian classical conception of social system, which does not explain the origin of social change (Luhmann, 1984; also Condorelli, 2025). Complexity explains it. Psychic system of individuals, micro or environment that never completely flatten themselves on institutionalized constraint and is capable of always giving new meanings to the world—things, roles, relationships...—and disrupting the relational organization of the social system, triggers social change. This change is led to its final configuration by the social, relational, system itself. It is the macro that autonomously and self-referentially re-organizes by selecting and stabilizing the most suitable and new meanings. It gives rise to an ever new, emerging and unpredictable, social system, to a new macro that reorients micro, allowing the micro-individuals to relate until the next change of meaning by the social system. Social system is a self-referential, autonomous with respect to environment, autopoietic, emerging, and therefore unpredictable, non-linear, system in its cultural meaning and relational process, that is, in its change and self-reorganization process. For example, when today we observe that there is an increasingly fragile couple system, we are saying that individuals—their psychic system—are the micro-environment able to produce a new relational meaning (freedom in partner choice). The social system—the macro—autonomously, like a *non-trivial machine*, selects and stabilizes meaning by novelty, by surprise. Modern and contemporary society has changed the meaning of intimacy by admitting free choice which *surprisingly* even means a free separation and fragility in intimate relationships. If love ends, it is culturally and socially “normal” to separate and divorce (Luhmann, 1982; also Condorelli, 2024). In an unpredictable, autonomous, self-referential, and autopoietic way, the social system self-organizes and *emerges* from the micro-environment that is reoriented in its relational meanings and social relationship (Luhmann,

1984; also Condorelli, 2025).

As I previously said, these clarifications are necessary to my hypothesis. The micro-macro-micro contemplated by complexity allows us, as Luhmann emphasizes, to acknowledge that social system is a *dynamic system*, changing in its relationship meaning. Democracy and pluralism, freedom, ambivalence and equality are our cultural and social change compared to a historical-social past. Indeed, ambivalence means freedom and social unpredictability, and a connection between hypercomplexity and disorganization and new self-organization (Morin, 1977, 2008). Complexity allows us to understand why over time the victimization has changed its meaning in dominant culture, excluding an organic rapport between beauty-goodness, in a continuum between social disorganization and new self-organization. But, as Sociology teaches us, this change is mostly sticky. Therefore, persistence can be understood only in this framework. As I said, current empirical observations induce to hypothesize that the traditional deterministic linear what is “beautiful *is* good” belief can be still found in cultural common sense.

In details, in this paper I argue evolutionary theories on physiognomic belief, psycho-evolutionary on attractiveness stereotyping and highlight some main critical aspects. This being stated, even criminological theories emphasizing a personalization process of offender image are argued. In particular, I deal with the Garofalo’s theory. Therefore, my hypothesis is a collective sociological hypothesis on persistence of the *physiognomic belief* in common cultural sense: the physiognomic belief is a *collective fact* which is persistent in cultural common sense in order to form the offender conception and consequently our judgments and behaviors in that peculiar social action sphere which is the victimization sphere. In particular, what is the *physiognomic belief*?

## 2. The *Physiognomic Belief* and Current Scientific Criticism

The *physiognomic belief* is the belief of inferring the individual’s character personality by its proportional or symmetric morphological features, by an equilibrated physical appearance due to a natural mechanism generating both physical constitution and moral character. This is equivalent to setting a correspondence between exteriority and interiority, physical appearance and character personality such that an organic character  $x$  corresponds to an organic physical conformation  $y$  and vice versa. In this regard, the physiognomic belief is one of the boldest hypotheses that have influenced Western thinking, incorporating two assumptions of an objective theoretical weight: on the one hand, the biological-genetic, anatomical and physiological, origin of physical traits as well as human dispositions and behaviors; on the other hand, the correspondence between aesthetic beauty and moral goodness, so that the beautiful man is identified with the virtuous man whereas the ugly or deformed, physically abnormal, man is a dissolute, sinful, moral anomalous man. And there is a general genetic foundation: external beauty is proportion, symmetry, regularity, *organic external equilibrium*, *order* or *harmony* in features of face and body due to *organic internal equilibrium*, *order* or

*harmony*. Physiognomists have no doubt that the physical appearance is a public indicator of an inner order having organic roots. Therefore, it is rational to judge by the appearance, to be wary of physical asymmetries and anomalies, to fix a myriad of detailed associations between morphological traits and personality traits in order to create a true science capable of explaining social actions, relational connections, predicting behavioral expectations and offering an undubitable service of public utility. This idea permeates the Greek culture, is in Homer's poetry and in Aristotle's philosophical writings, and continues to be cultivated in medieval Europe and Enlightenment—in the words of literary writers and philosophers—, and until the early 1900s in modern *Criminal Anthropology* along the line of Lombroso and Hooton.

According to evolutionists, the physiognomic belief has its roots in human evolution. It is a mechanism of reproductive and evolutionary success. From this perspective, we have evolved to prefer “beautiful” people, where this “beauty” is an indicator of “good genes”, health and reproductive success. This belief is the result of a biological programming, a “natural”, irrational disposition which activates instinctively, an automatic and unconscious reaction to an external stimulus. Beginning with Greek culture, this belief extends in considering that external, organic, beauty is the sign of goodness-morality, internal, organic, beauty, and this becomes a cultural, collective fact.

In classical Greek culture and society, Physiognomy is more than an isolated or personal idea. It is embedded in a cultural, collective, cosmic vision of the world, that is, a universal vision conforming everything—human soul as well as the regular movement of the stars—to harmony. Indeed, cosmic harmony or beauty also means harmony or beauty of human soul. The soul or essence of the humanity is in unison with the soul or essence of the physical universe, which is order and equilibrium, and consequently the human essence is perfection, internal beauty or goodness. And just as harmony of the universe has perceptible traces in a visible order of things, in the physical reality, the perfection or inner goodness is expressed by external physical harmony or order, by a conjunction between external beauty and moral goodness. Therefore, human order is equilibrium, proportion or symmetry in the face and body traits. *The beautiful is good*, is harmonious, namely, he is proportionate in his face features and consequently he is harmonious in his organic moral constitution (*goodness*). Instead, *the ugly is bad*, is marked by an external ugliness, by criteria that concern ugliness in contrast with external beauty criteria, that is, irregular and anomalous features. The “what is beautiful *is* good” stereotype is considered to be an absolute truth and it is no a mere coincidence that in Homer Thersites is an ugly and bad man, in Sappho's poetry (Sappho, *Fragments*, No. 101) “external beauty” is a sign of “inner beauty”, and in Aristotle's writings (see *De generatione animalium* into the *Corpus aristotelicum*) personality traits can be derived from physical appearance (e.g. red, fox-like, hair, indicating a tangible sign of cunning and deceit). Therefore, the main implication of the physiognomic belief is the possibility of distinguishing the average man

from the criminal man: if it is true that the essence of the body is contained in the soul or that the body conditions the soul, then a criminal character personality and behavior have to be related to physical disharmonies, to visible signs of a natural tare of asociality. Therefore, from Plato to Plotinus, the ugliness is absence of truth and goodness; it is the  $\chi\alpha\omicron\varsigma$  into order, the non-being of things, which should be suppressed, tamed, submitted to order which is guarantee and protection of the  $\pi\omicron\lambda\iota\varsigma$ .

In time, this cosmic inspiration of the Greek *calocracy*, this insistent, primary, philosophical-ethical, reference to the unity of things and human beings, to order-harmony (*cosmos*) of universe has essentially evaporated. But the essential structure of the physiognomic reasoning has not evaporated. Until the 1950, the idea of the indissoluble, organic, anatomical-physiological, correspondence between “corporality” and “thought”, physical and moral human nature which are considered intimately connected elements, human physical symmetry/physical beauty and spiritual equilibrium/moral beauty has been preserved in Western culture. The external signs of face and body by which people believe to know the human soul (and therefore the human character personality) are still not interchangeable signs. Each human type *has* external traits, morphological traits, a physical appearance or external nature and a corresponding internal nature. These signs are substance and are not a mere shape. Therefore, the correlation between aesthetic beauty and moral goodness and ugliness and moral badness as well as symmetry or asymmetry of somatic features remain constant beliefs. Since the external beauty is mirror of internal beauty and physical disharmony is a visible trace of a far more serious moral deformity, in the Middle Ages and in the Enlightenment physical appearance continues to have an ethical meaning. There is a true mystique of appearance which expands beyond classical Greek culture and society. The physiognomic belief has thus crystallized in many popular sayings and significant manifestations in the fields of art, law, ethics, literature, philosophy and criminology. It is the result of an anthropological vision in which the criminal is such *by nature* and has a relational life which is rooted in his physical organization.

In medieval Europe, the belief in an organic correlation between physical and moral nature explains why the laws instructed judges to condemn the “ugliest” of two people who were equally suspected for the same crime. Even after, by considering that literature is a representation of culture and society, in the Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* Cassius is a dangerous man for his lean and hungry appearance (*Julius Caesar, Act I, scene II*). In his philosophical writings Voltaire (1759) endows *Candide* with external and internal signs of beauty-goodness, and Lavater postulates a correspondence between moral and physical beauty in a Christian perspective and places Physiognomy in a theological-ethnological framework (Lavater, 1772). Again in literature, a few decades later Shelley (1818) gives life to her *Modern Prometheus*. Frankenstein, *the thing*, is ugly and bad, and few decades later Uriah Heep—another literary icon—is still ugly and bad. Dickens repeatedly de-

scribes him as a repulsive man—a thin, pale, red hair, dull look, crawling movements, slimy man—being an emblematic semblance of human falsity and greed (Dickens, 1850). And, by referring to another contemporary myth, what mean Stevenson when he raises the issue of the duplicity inherent in the human nature as an incongruous mixture of good and evil and attributes two distinct appearances to good and evil? In Victorian England, Jekyll—a respectable, honest, kind person, and a tall, robust, shapely and fresh face man—can *drives headlong into the sea* of will freedom, whom he sacrificed for a life of virtue, self-control and renunciation, only transforming in his opposite. And he can experience how illusory that freedom is by retransforming. Stevenson is no different from Homer or Aristotle. He represents Hyde an ugly and cruel man by nature, whose instincts, intelligence, and energies are oriented toward the evil, toward his own selfish, uncontrolled, violent, and antisocial satisfaction. Stevenson attributes to him the features of a new, modern Thersites, an unpleasant and detestable appearance conveying an impression of deformity and depravity. Indeed, he is a small in stature, pale, short arms, hairy, stubby hands, repulsive smile, hoarse voice man. Hyde is a primordial being, the physical reflection of an evil soul that emanates from its clay shell, transfiguring Jekyll. Stevenson is convinced the goodness radiates from human face as well as the evil is clearly stamped on individual's face and leaves an imprint of deformity and decay on his body (Stevenson, 1886).

10 years have passed since Lombroso (1876) published *L'uomo delinquent* and formulated his *Atavism Theory*. According to Lombroso, the criminal is an atavistic human being who reproduces in his own face and body the ferocious instincts of a primitive humanity and wild animals. Indeed, in his criminal anthropology or positivist criminology, criminal behavior is biologically determined and some individuals are inevitably destined to commit crimes due to their genetic constitution. (*Born Criminal Theory*). This genetic constitution expresses in atavistic, primordial, physical and functional characteristics which manifest a moral degeneration—e.g., large jaws, strong canines, highly developed middle incisors, prominent cheekbones, prominent brow ridges, upper limbs longer than the individual's height, a flat nose, prognathism, reduced sensitivity to pain, dichromatopsia, and highest laziness (Lombroso, 1876), The comparison between 340 serious criminals and 711 soldiers led Lombroso to exclude any constitutional or functional abnormality in “normal” individuals. Lombroso thus *physiognomically* associates atavistic traits with aggression and crime and concludes that individuals' predisposition to selfish, antisocial, and impulsive instincts and criminal behaviors can be predicted from offender physical characteristics. This organic physical primitivism *necessarily* gives rise to a primitive behavior, that is, to a devoid of morality and criminal behavior.

The influence of *L'uomo delinquente* in Italy, France, and Germany was immediate and decisive such as Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Although the results of his work were published in 1876, after the Gall's phrenology which correlated the organic-anatomical brain development to criminality, Lombroso conceives the task

of a fully scientific treatment of the physiognomic belief. In this regard, he uses the method of craniometry that was widely spread and adopted in Europe. Substantial differences can be noted between Lombroso's organography and organography of other scholars, especially physicians. For example, the physician and precursor of Wilson (1869) already believed that cranial deficiency was associated with a real physical deterioration (*The Imbecility of Habitual Criminals as exemplified by cranial measurements*, 1869). He had measured 464 skulls of criminals and found that habitual thieves had clear signs of an insufficient skull development, especially in its anterior part. 40% of all prisoners was more or less disabled, and this percentage was higher in professional thieves. In the same year, Thomson, doctor in Perth prison, at Scotland, confirmed these conclusions by observing 5000 prisoners. And the same relation between physical traits and crime was affirmed from Benedikt which is a neurologist and one of the most original scholars of architecture of skull (Benedikt, 1879). However, Lombroso is the first to support and popularize the Theory of born criminal as the product of an anomaly who is not a psychological anomaly, as Despina (1886) sustained (*Natural Psychology*), but an *anatomically* and *physiologically* organic one. He found that prisoners and Sardinian bandits had abnormal skull, general asymmetry of facial features, prominent brow ridges and jaws, median occipital fossa, receding forehead, and Wormian bones, and these features were evidence of the correlation between anatomical and physiological development and crime. However, Lombroso ignores the state of necessity as well as doesn't consider that just for this reason thieves prisoners and Sardinian bandits were more usual to have certain physical characteristics. In other terms, he is not able to test his theory: he has to demonstrate that economically wealthy individuals having signs of atavism commit crimes. No evidence of this is found in the Lombroso's writings.

In any case, after Galton's studies on general hereditary and studies of Lombroso which even uses the Galton's method of overlapping photographs on criminal hereditary, the union of body and soul is celebrated in a new way. Crime scholars and anthropologist analyzed Physiognom whereby a scientific spirit. Different results in skull measurement of hundreds of prisoners compared to skull measurement of ordinary people samples and different classifications of anthropometric traits supported the *Born Criminal Theory* and fixed a natural distinction between the normal man and the criminal man. By associating cranial deficiency with moral decay, this is the case with anthropological-sociological studies of Marro (1887), which was a Lombroso's follower (*I Caratteri dei delinquenti*, 1887), Havelock Ellis's (1890) ones (*The Criminal*, 1890), which was a psychologist and supporter of the Born Criminal Theory in England, and Clouston's (1894) ones (*The Developmental Aspects of Criminal Anthropology*, 1894), to name only the most well-known studies. For example, Havelock Ellis infers the success of the physiognomic belief and its implications from scientific observations and statistical analysis of his time. According to Ellis, modern criminal anthropology confirmed physical characteristics by which Homer describes Thersites—an ugly and

deformed man, a thin, sparse and wiry hair, pointed head, man (Ellis, 1890)—and this provided him with further evidence of the existence of a criminal type of man.

Until the early decades of the 20th century the physiognomic belief has a widespread acceptance. As late as 1939, Hooton (1939a, 1939b) (*The American criminal: an anthropological study. Vol. 1. The native white criminal of native parentage*, 1939a; see even *Crime and the Man*, 1939b), confirmed the Lombroso's conclusions in his 12-year study comparing a random sample of 13.873 male prisoners taken from 10 American states to a random sample of 3.023 males taken from general population. The idea of a born criminal, who bears the organic roots of his perversion in deformities of his face and body, substantiates the concept of deviance. It resolves the dilemmas of the responsibility and imputability and justifies the use of extreme means—including the death penalty—in order to ensure the social defense and security. Studies on Physiognomy preserve even the foundations of the *eugenic justificationism* whereby societies can be saved from degeneration. The Darrè's ruralism, tragic sterilizations of 1920s and 1930s, mass exterminations of euthanasia program and Nazi concentration camps do not escape this conceptual framing.

So far there is a prevailing defense of the beauty. It is *necessarily* and *naturally* sublime, virtuous, and edifying. And beauty has these attributes even in the Romantic Socialism which is between the July monarchy and the second Empire. However, Sue, De Vigny, Dumas, Hugo privileged the ugliness and badness—murder, suicide, theft, incest, prostitution—as a necessity product rather than a nature product. As Nesti (1987) remind us in his contribution regarding the rapport between *Ethics* and *Aesthetics*, they were considered guilty of poeticizing crimes and placing them into the heart of art under the concept “le laid c'est beau”.

The more science has progressed, the more Physiognomy has remained devoid of the theoretical framework that from Plato to Lombroso ensured meaning and reason to it. In other terms, it was matter of erecting edifice of the Science of Physiognomy. And this edifice was erected until research advances have demonstrated how much its foundations were unstable. These research advances emphasize that appearance is not the translation of an inner order and the organic correlation between internal and external traits has no factual bases.

After 1950, sociological reflection traces the lines of transformation of the concept of deviance and social control. Indeed, social theories reject the genetic perspective of analytical deviance and Lombroso's Theory. If the analytical conception of the deviance means that an individual is deviant by nature, he is deviant everywhere. *Everywhere* he is out of the social pact in which a society recognizes itself. He threatens social integration, the normal and regular development of interaction processes ensured from institutionalized structures. The society defends itself by rigidly repressive strategies of formal control. Beginning with Durkheim, a relativistic and historical conception of normality/deviance is established by which an act is deviant because it offends collective conscience. This conception is related to socio-cultural contexts and to changes in space, time, and situations.

Indeed, if deviance depends on collective conscience that means and defines it, this means that it depends on culture which regulates individual behaviors and constitutes the deviance because it violates the norms that society itself establishes for its integration. There is a shift from pathological and correctional perspectives which define intrinsically evil actions to the *mala quia prohibita* concept. The acts are unlawful because laws prohibited them and they are not prohibited in themselves and therefore unlawful. This conceptual shift is associated with judgments of guilt due to a conscious individual responsibility. This was clear to Durkheim, and to the sociologists such Sutherland, Merton, Miller, etc.

Today, after a significant reduction of genetic perspective in favor of social one, the relationship between physical nature and behavior—e.g. aggression—has been re-established by current Behavioral Genetics and Neuroscience. Although the idea of a necessary, organic, causal relationship between physical appearance and inner world has been rejected as an unscientific idea, technological advances find evidences of the biological influence on human behavior whereby brain's functional indicators (MRI and fMRI functional neuroimaging) and complex genetic tests. Since research insists on the need to recognize the impact of natural, genetic and neurobiological, determinants on criminal behavior, there is a renewed, modern, Lombrosianism, rejecting an organic relationship between offender's physical *stigmata* and his internal organic moral constitution (i.e. Sartori, 2011; also Codognotto & Sartori, 2010; Sammiceli & Sartori, 2010; Sartori & Zangrossi, 2016). In Italy, the Appeal Court of Assizes in Trieste reduced the sentence of a murderer whereby data of a molecular genetic testing and neuropsychological testing. This is the first time in Europe that behavioral genetic research influenced a sentence by the study of neural correlates of mental illness (MRI), and the diagnosis of criminal behavior as a nature behavior by the study of genetic factors and brain's psychological structure).

Summing up these argumentations, two conclusions can be deduced.

First, modern science has pursued Lombroso's project of identifying the organic bases of behavior. As I said, genetic research and Neuroscience show that it is problematic to deny the effect of genetic, physiological, neural, components on behaviors. However, there is nothing definitive, conclusive. The *Nature vs Nurture* issue requires to acknowledge the biological origin of behavioral predispositions and also to fix the proportion in which nature influences these predispositions. How much does nature influence behavior? And how much does culture influence it? These are crucial questions, and the answer requires an unambiguous proportion of the incidence of both components. Nevertheless, the boundary between *Nature* and *Nurture* is uncertain and this finding prevents a genetic predictability. For example, research has discovered that genetic hormonal polymorphisms are significantly associated with impulsive, aggressive, behaviors. However, if aggressive or not aggressive behaviors (individual outcomes) imply a certain type of biological basis, no prediction is possible. Indeed, environmental situation, with its myriad of possibilities, is capable of transforming the biological

“constraint” in different behavioral outcomes. There is an unavoidable probabilistic dimension: hormonal variations produce an increased risk of aggressive behaviors, but this actual behavioral effect depends on environmental variables, such as the experience of stressful events during adolescence. As I just said, the significance of this finding is clear. It is not sufficient to a fully genetic, neurobiological, interpretation of criminal behavior. We do not know what “surprises” biological sciences will bring us and what conclusions we will be forced to draw. But now the question is still an open question.

Second, today we scientifically know appearance is not the necessary reflection of an inner world. Today, we scientifically know that the conceptualization of an innate nature, who abandons the shadow of inner where it dwells to show itself externally in anthropometric traits, has no a scientific basis. This belief is a *fanciful* idea, a matter of mere fantasy. Modern science has demonstrated it and has rejected the organic physiognomic belief which is considered a pseudo-science. However, are we sure that what applies to science and dominant culture even applies to common sense? Are we sure that Lavater was not right when he believed that people trust Physiognomy despite its errors? And what is a *Naïve* Physiognomy?

### 3. Naïve Physiognomy: Attractiveness Stereotyping

As I said, the psychic system is the micro environment which means the world and is capable of producing that new relational meaning that autonomously the social system—the macro—selects and stabilizes by novelty, by surprise.

Therefore, *Cognitive Psychology* analyzes the criteria underlying the mental processing of information—external inputs—and judgments which lead to behavioral choices. Much research concerns the beauty impact as orientation criterion in social interactions disposition, making appearance an *important* stimulus for social interaction. And it focuses on amygdala development and its role in understanding and using information and on psychological development of persons which judge by appearance and are susceptible to *attractiveness stereotyping* rather than on the anatomical, lombrosian question beauty-goodness of who is judged. In particular, this research focuses on first impression and perceived face attractiveness as judgment and behavior criterion (There is a vast literature on first impression and *attractiveness stereotyping*. More recently, i.e. Blair et al., 2004; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b; Todorov et al., 2015; Todorov, 2017; Zebrowitz, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2017; Suzuki et al., 2017; Sutherland & Young, 2022; Hu & O’Toole, 2023; Trifonova et al., 2024; Han et al., 2025), on effects of perceived attractiveness over social behavior, and on psychological structure of persons who are susceptible to *attractiveness stereotyping*. Today, amygdala and neural or mental processes are analyzed by using advanced technologies (i.e. Wang et al., 2010; Tsukiura & Cabeza, 2011; Todorov, 2012; Trujillo et al., 2013; Lan et al., 2021). These researches are psycho-evolutionary researches.

Theorists support there is a *naïve* Physiognomy in all social areas: although psy-

cho-evolutionary research has demonstrated that the *attractive stereotyping* is a *bias* or distortion of judgment leading to incorrect decisions, people tend to estimate persons as attractive or unattractive persons. Those who are judged physically attractive are also considered to have socially desirable personality traits and greater social skills rather than those who are perceived to be physically unattractive. There is a *halo effect* by which “most beautiful” persons are perceived to be “the best” persons: perceived face attractiveness is associated with intelligence, competence, talent, willpower, trustworthiness (i.e. Eagly et al., 1991; Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004; Willis & Todorov, 2006; Engell et al., 2007; Todorov et al., 2008, 2009; Young et al., 2015; Li & Yu, 2022; Gulati et al., 2024; Todorov et al., 2025), power, health (psychological well-being and biological fitness, i.e. Umberson & Hughes, 1987; Kalick et al., 1998; Rhodes et al., 2007), and reproduction, career, life success such as marital and economic success (Zebrowitz et al., 2003; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2008; Jokela, 2009; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Jaeger et al., 2020; Hamer-mesh, 2011; Converse et al., 2016; Gruys, 2019). Indeed, different areas of relational adult life have been identified—such as those relating to occupational prestige and personal happiness—in which physical attractiveness has a decisive role in influencing personality judgments and probability of success as well as behaviors. By analyzing interpersonal consequences of the *attractiveness stereotyping*, these studies have shown that *halo effect* predicts some important social outcomes. Indeed, those who are considered attractive persons are capable of favorably influencing expectations in social areas such as those involving the partner choice, even online (the attractive partner is considered a “better” spouse and parent; i.e. Dion et al., 1972; Kowner, 1995; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Rhodes & Zebrowitz, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2005; Brand et al., 2012; Petrican et al., 2014; Roth et al., 2023), hiring decisions (i.e. Dipboye et al., 1977; Cann et al., 1981; Morrow, 1990; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Chiu & Babcock, 2002; Hosoda et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2010; Shahani-Denning et al., 2011; Ruffle & Shtudiner, 2011; Commisso & Finkelstein, 2012; López Bóo et al., 2013; Turner et al., 2016; Akila & Jayanthi Rani, 2018; Shtudiner, 2019; Goulão et al., 2024) performance evaluation (i.e. Morrow & McElroy, 1984; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Mobius & Rosenblat, 2006; Liu et al., 2013), promotion (i.e. Chung & Leung, 1988; Morrow et al., 1990), earning and salary determination (i.e. Morrow et al., 1990; Scholz & Sicinski, 2015; Kanazawa & Still, 2017). A perceived beautiful appearance influences a favorable hiring decision than work experience of perceived unattractive candidates (i.e. Nault et al., 2020). Perceived attractive persons are more persuasive, more convincing, more successful in changing opinion to an audience (i.e. Chaiken, 1979). In the field of electoral procedures, the *halo effect* has an impact on voting decisions. It predicts the electoral success of perceived attractive candidates, who often received twice as many votes as perceived unattractive candidates (i.e. Efrain & Patterson, 1976; Kulka & Kessler, 1978; Budesheim & DePaola, 1994; Todorov et al., 2005; Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2008; Lawson et al., 2010; Olivola & Todorov, 2010a; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Hart et al., 2011; Little et

al., 2012; Todorov et al., 2015; Olivola et al., 2018; Gruys, 2019; Lowman et al., 2019; Firpo & Wajskop, 2021; Carrión-Yguana & Carroll, 2022; Janusz & Carrión-Yaguana, 2025).

Perceived attractive people receive a preferential treatment even in an unsuspected field: the judicial system. Some research shows that perceived attractive offenders influence legal decisions: they were considered less able to reoffend and consequently received more lenient and favorable sentences compared to offenders that committed the same crime but had scars and evident irregularities in their face and body (i.e. Cavior et al., 1974; Sigall & Ostrove, 1975; Kulka & Kessler, 1978; Stewart, 1980, 1985; Berry & Zebrowitz, 1988; Castellow et al., 1990; Wuensch & Castellow, 1991; Wiley, 1995; Blair et al., 2004; Eberhardt et al., 2006; Wilson & Rule, 2015; Beaver et al., 2019; Jaeger et al., 2020; Knox & TenEyck, 2023). If offender was perceived to be a more attractive person rather than his victim, handsome offender experienced a double likelihood of avoiding prison, benefited from greater availability of help in times of need (i.e. Benson et al., 1976), had easier acceptance and social reintegration after serving his sentence, and victim's compensation was halved compared to compensation which was formally awarded to victims. This *attractiveness-based favoritism* (Kulka & Kessler, 1978) was expressed by male judges as well as by female judges.

A state of surprise and alertness derives from these researches, particularly from the most recent, modern researches. The attractiveness has not disappeared as a guiding criterion capable of regulating perceptions, judgments, and ultimately behaviors. People rapidly look the appearance, *effortless* (Willis & Todorov, 2006: p. 598) judge by the first impression (*cit.*: 592), and when people are confronted with a person whom they perceive to be an attractive individual are more willing to trust—to vote for him, to hire him, to help him. This orientation questions rationality criteria underlying judgment and decision-making processes. The attractiveness judgment is conceived to be integral part of a cognitive process that is systematically activated. Indeed, regardless the variance of contexts there is no difference between young and old men, educated and less educated men, among races, or even among cultures. Attractiveness is an input which people positively assess. Consequently, the starting point of research in this area is the clarification of the attractiveness concept.

The concept of beauty has been a turning point in psychological research on attractiveness stereotyping. Indeed, it underlines the need to ensure it to standards of a more controlled scientific research.

Older studies have not a conceptual definition of attractiveness. Researchers presented photographs of faces to a group of raters. When this group agreed in rating certain faces as beautiful faces, they classified these faces as attractive faces. In so doing, these findings have a vagueness which is inappropriate for a controlled and predictive scientific research. Indeed, the attractiveness stereotyping remains an unexplained fact: if A is judged by consensus to be beautiful and has a rate of greater intelligence, talent, or success, the stereotype is confirmed, but since

we do not know the criteria whereby A is judged to be a beautiful person the reasons for this confirmation are not clear. In other words, without a clarification of the criteria that inform the concept of beauty in its concrete meaning references, the process of attributing socially desirable personality traits to individuals which are rated to be beautiful is an ambiguous process. Obviously, the possibility of a predictive approach is excluded.

Beginning in the 1970s, the most current studies have a more controlled definition of beauty concept. Beauty is symmetry, average of facial features by the width/height ratio. By manipulating the relationship between these two dimensions—width and height—from a minimum to a maximum proportionality, faces are artificially created and photographs of neutral faces—without an obvious expressiveness in order to avoid the influence of emotional factors on judgments—are presented to groups of raters. The same face is rated and proportionate faces are the indicator of a *halo effect*—higher intelligence, success, trust, and less aggressiveness—in many social relationships—elections, hiring, mate selection, court decisions, etc. Similarly, less pronounced eyebrows, cheekbones, and chins (e.g., Todorov, Baron, & Osterhof, 2008).

There is a progress. However, it does not take away the fact that there are many reasons for perplexity.

On the one hand, I agree with Langlois that initial efforts on attractiveness stereotyping are *atheoretical*, that is, they are not conceptually guided (Langlois et al., 2000). On the other hand, even today certain key points remain open. As I said, psycho-evolutionary theorists analyze psychological structure and the amygdala development of those who judge. There is a new Phrenology. Algorithms profile people by facial features, expressions, and other physical details, and the problem of judging our neighbors based on their appearance re-emerges. A definitive proportion of nature—amygdala development—rather than culture remains open. Can we separate psychological development from culture and socialization process? Is the brain the machine which the culture, like the fuel, powers and drives it? In this regard, there is a controversy between psycho-evolutionary theories and socio-cultural theories.

The beauty concept has given further lynch to the controversy between psycho-evolutionary and socio-cultural theories. According to attractiveness stereotyping approach, beauty is an input which has an innate nature (i.e. Zebrowitz et al., 2003; Dion, 2002), a proportional, quantitatively measurable, human attribute able to explain two main findings: the *interculturality* of the orientation to consider beautiful persons who have symmetric face features and prefer them, and the *spread* of this orientation among infants. Since Sociology predicts a cultural specificity of attractiveness criteria by a synchronic intercultural agreement (between societies) and a diachronic intracultural difference (within the same society), the question is legitimate: is interculturality found why the face symmetry is a cultural universal, which has to be clarified in its contents in different cultures as scientific social research clarified for language, family (Morgan, 1877), etc.?

Furthermore and again, *how much* do culture and socialization affect judgment and behavior processes of adults? Although psychological researchers (i.e. [Albohn et al., 2024](#); [Todorov et al., 2025](#)) found an idiosyncratic variance of judgments due to observer's age and race, the problems remain.

Even it's unclear why the psycho-evolutionary thesis also applies to judgments about character personality traits that have nothing to do with expectations of well health and reproductive success. If the symmetry of facial features signals well-being, fitness and reproductive success, why should we infer trustworthiness, intelligence, competence, success and occupational prestige, etc.? What does the trustworthiness has to do with the fitness, reproductive success, competence, that is, with usefulness?

Langlois attempts to solve the controversy between psycho-evolutionary and socio-cultural theories by arguing that there is not only one explanation for the effects of attractiveness ([Langlois et al., 2000](#): p. 408). Evolutionary and socio-cultural theories are complementary rather than contradictory theories. The origins of Physiognomy or attractiveness stereotyping, what Langlois defines *distal roots*, are due to an evolutionary past. The *proximal effects* are due to socialization processes. Therefore, for Langlois, the tendency to place facial appearance in the framework of a natural, adaptive, instinctive, and unconscious human disposition resolves the question of why and how the stereotype originated *in the first place* (*ibidem*).

However, in my opinion, the evidence of failures confuses the whole framework. If accurate inferences are not guaranteed by appearance judgments and these judgments can be deceiving, can we explain these repeated failures without manifestly contradicting psycho-evolutionary theories? Can *Naïve Physiognomy* be an organic adaptive reaction in order to solve the problem of inferring victimization? Failures are difficult to integrate into psycho-evolutionary theoretical framework without compromising its internal coherence: if the attractiveness stereotyping does not work, it is not an adaptive reaction and should have disappeared. Instead, it persists.

This being said, the *naïve Physiognomy*, the psychological structure of who judges by attractiveness and potential effects of this orientation in many domains of interpersonal behavior, cannot be separated from culture. According to me, the criteria which are capable of inducing alarm when the focus is on personal security, that is, when we need to infer whether another person we interact with can harm us, are a cultural fact. The amygdala development is not independent of culture. In this regard, my hypothesis is far from the *naïve Physiognomy*. And it is also far from the well known criminological theory of Garofalo. In this theory the offender idea is not a collective, cultural, fact, but it is a personalization process. Offender attractiveness is an implicit process, which changes from person to person.

#### 4. Garofalo's Criminological Approach to the Offender

Since 1981, in particular Garofalo's criminology has widely recognized the im-

portance of offender in victimization risks causing feelings of danger and anxiety for threats of physical harms (*fear of crime* which is opposed to *worry* referring to less emotional, more cerebral and rational, reactions to crimes—e.g. property harms). However, he propose an offender and crime image which is a personalization process, which changes from person to person. Instead, in my opinion, the fear of crime and the offender idea is a collective phenomenon that persists in cultural common sense and it is not a matter of personalization.

Indeed, what does Garofalo theorize?

In *The Fear of Crime: Causes and Consequences*, Garofalo (1981) develops a general model of crime personalization that describes how people interpret crime information and form their crime mental image. Although Garofalo does not explicitly propose it, offender attractiveness can be inserted in his victimization process. In this regard, Garofalo explores personal, psychological and social factors that influence the personal perception of crime and people's fear to be victimized as well as their consequences on people life, such as changes in daily behavior, effects on the quality of individual and social life, and the adoption of safeguarding strategies. From this perspective, Garofalo emphasizes that the fear of crime is not a rational reaction to crimes, but is influenced by personal factors able to create a subjective crime image. As I previously said, this image changes from person to person. Therefore, his general model is not a causal model (*path diagram*) but illustrates hypotheses on how categories of variables are interrelated in order to form the perceived crime image (*cit.*: 842). In brief, this is the model.

More analytically, the model refers the fear of crime to a *personalization process*. Crime image is based on quantity and quality of crime information depending on the subject's social space. Indeed, the factors that form crime image concern subject's status, education, age, gender, lifestyle (i.e. habits relating to occupational and recreational activities), direct experiences of victimization, interpersonal communication networks based on direct or indirect crime experiences and on mass media crime communication, current level of crime and its change (the extension of crime in neighborhood, city, nation, etc.), relative ratios of various types of crime and degree of violence involved in each crime (*the nature of crimes*), consequences of crimes in social prestige (*stigma*), physical, psychological, and social characteristics of victims, and perceived physical, psychological and social characteristics of offenders. *Mediation factors* influence this process: subject's attitudes, beliefs and convictions inducing a selective perception of crime information. For example—and this example is an Garofalo's example—individuals which have racist beliefs are susceptible to an information which reports that offender is black (they assume that offender is black even when information conceals offender's racial affiliation).

At this point, actors assess their victimization risk. They personalize their crime image. They consider the personal probability of becoming a victim (degree of exposure to crime situations and places where certain types of crime prevail) and the level of vulnerability (assessment to be a target for offenders). Finally, the cir-

cle closes. The model's last step concerns the adoption of protective strategies in reaction to fear. Given certain demographic characteristics such as age and gender and given the degree of perceived vulnerability to psychological and economic harms, actors assess their personal capacity of resisting to harms by their own resources. Indeed, the choice of reaction strategies depends on intensity of fear to be victimized and on personal costs of reactions, that is, on their sustainability due to resources that potential victims have considering their social position. According to Garofalo, these reaction strategies include: reducing the exposure to crimes by avoiding situations and places which are perceived to have a high risk of victimization (*avoidance strategies*), increasing the resistance to victimization by strengthening personal defenses and home security (*protection strategies*), minimizing the costs of victimization (*insurance strategies*), coordinating collective actions against crime (*participation strategies*), sharing crime emotions and crime information (*communication strategies*), increasing the knowledge of crimes as well as their control by monitoring for signs indicating danger. And there are even reduced levels of social interactions. Lifestyle is influenced by the adopted reaction. For example, reduced levels of social interaction weaken horizontal and vertical solidarity. In turn, distrust in formal social control system reduces the effectiveness of informal social controls and causes a deterioration of environment (e.g. closure of public establishments and shops, relocation of wealthier residents). This generates a truly perverse effect: an increase in crime rates.

Garofalo theorizes that this assessment of personal sustainability in adopting protection strategies is capable of triggering a *cognitive dissonance process* in definition of the crime situation: potential victims can redefine the crime situation as a situation that is less dangerous than before and do not devote other resources to their personal protection, otherwise potential victims can redefine the crime situation even more dangerous than before and devote consistent resources to their personal protection. They reinforce their own fear and cognitively justify own greater expenses than before.

The crime image is the frame of reference by which threat of offender image can be inferred. Therefore, even offender image has an impact on crime image: it is capable of influencing judgments of personal vulnerability and subjective probability of victimization. This being said, what characteristics do people believe offenders have? Garofalo suggests to reconstruct the concrete meaning of offender image by a clarification of offender's psychological, social, and physical characteristics that are perceived from the individual conscience. Garofalo himself, for example, suggests that the typical image of offender is male, young, black, and low social status. Therefore, all model's components have to be filled with a concrete meaning: what do people actually think about the nature and extent of crime? What idea do people have of physical, psychological, and social characteristics of victims and physical, psychological, and social characteristics of offenders? How does this information change depending on victim's position in social space? How do crime beliefs influence the crime image? However, according to Garofalo, these

questions are *personal* questions as well as other questions that are also highlighted by Garofalo himself (e.g. how accurately do people estimate their own victimization risk? What is the relationship between current fear—relating to a current danger—and anticipated fear—relating to hypothetical dangerous situations? What are the costs that influence individual reactions to fear of crime, and how do they operate? What are the social consequences of individual's reactions to fear, and how can these outcomes be modified?). This explains why he considers his model a simplification of a much more complex reality (*ibidem*) and therefore a *tentative model* of the causes and consequences of the fear of crime (*ibidem*).

Today, much criminological research refers causes of crime to factors such as poverty, family dynamics, childhood experience, peer pressure, drug and alcohol misuse. However, research studies on offender image are fewer and not definitive (i.e. Hale, 1988, which refers Garofalo's model).

As I said, Garofalo does not propose anything on physiognomic belief, on offender character and on attractive stereotyping, but precisely this allows us to insert these aspects in his model. Therefore, I report his criminological theory because the problem is that offender image is a matter of personalization. In my opinion, empirical observations and social complexity theory (1 paragraph) allows us to hypothesize that offender idea is a factor which does not change from person to person but it is a collective, cultural, factor, which persists in cultural common sense.

## 5. Conclusion

Empirical observations and complex system conception induce to hypothesize that deterministic linear and organic belief what is beautiful *is* good has not disappeared in common culture, above all in common western culture. Sociologically, I hypothesize physiognomic belief it is a collective phenomenon that persists in common sense due to *stickiness* of cultural change in a complex social system. If symbolically society changes, if it selects and stabilizes meaning by surprise and culturally and relationally changes in an unpredictable way, the *stickiness* of cultural change allows us to hypothesize this persistence.

As I previously said, many reasons cast doubt the internal coherence of an evolutionary and psycho-evolutionary approach. According to my perspective, the main problem is how much the nature influences who commits crimes and who judges compared the culture. This proportion is unclear. Therefore, evolutionary theories and psycho-evolutionary theories which give importance to *Nature* compared to *Nurture* are not definitive. They leave important questions open. This applies to failures: if physiognomy belief and attractiveness stereotyping do not work, they are not an adaptive reaction to uncertainty and should have disappeared. Instead, empirical observations show they persist.

This being said, social research must to verify: 1) persistence of physiognomic beliefs in the assessment of victimization risks and decision-making process (the personality information by face attractiveness can influence a decision-making

process in situations of potential victimization e.g. meeting in the street and alone a stranger having asymmetric face traits, opening home door to perceived beautiful strangers, etc.), 2) a difference between dominant culture and ordinary culture in western culture (These studies are not cognitive psychology studies where the sample can be a sample of volunteers university students. In the sociological research the sample has to be a representative sample. Furthermore, social factors such as age, gender, and status, race have to be controlled by interdependent variables as level of education or culture, 3) a discussion of the implications of this research for general behavior and victimization.

In this regard, research can help people to contain the influence of physiognomic belief and, as Langlois and Dion before him said, to safeguard the impartiality and democracy ideals in social interaction processes. Research on Physiognomy might force people to see what they don't want to see. If, as Parsons says, the indicator of our contemporary modern society is its relational democracy, the *physiognomic belief* introduces a singular element of particularism and determinism linear (if A then B) in social interaction. The universalism of our dominant culture pushes people to repress the physiognomic belief awareness in judgments and decision-making processes. This repression is incomprehensible in Greek culture and society where the beauty is the celebration of an intimate order in things and in humanity. As I said, here the cult of beauty has a profound ethical justification: beauty is soul harmony and order in Greek world and no one thinks that preferring the external beauty conflicts with ideals of fairness or justice. But for us, men of our era, the problem is different, so much so that preferring external beauty has an opposite meaning. People would never tell to be partial in their judgments. Rationally people discredit the role of appearance as a criterion of judgment and behavior in social human relationships. People formulate harsh judgements for those who judge "a book by its cover" and do not acknowledge the power of what Socrates had no difficulty in defining a pretty tyranny, a minor tyranny—as beauty is short-lived—but still a tyranny. People don't acknowledge what Plato defines the privilege of the nature and Montaigne—in his *Essays*—a powerful quality in human relationships, able to seduce and dominate our judgments by authority. However, the powerful yoke of beauty seems to be remained ever-present. It is not easy to escape its influence and avoid risks of violating the universalism that represents our current modernity.

By showing that Physiognomy is not scientifically founded, current research must force people to stand in front of mirror and behave "conscientiously and humanely" (Langlois et al., 2000: p. 408). And, since the Physiognomy seems to influence even the personal security, research can help people prevent victimization risk. This means first to influence school education: although the physiognomic belief is scientifically inconsistent, social research must show it seems to persist in common western cultural sense and demonstrate this hypothesis. And it must show the dangerous consequences of believing to Physiognomy and echo Langlois and Dion and their hopes.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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