Classical criminology

Arising out of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, classical criminology was concerned, above all, with producing a more rational criminal justice system. It was argued that society was a contract; crime breached that contract and was therefore, a moral and a political issue requiring state control. However, that control should be rational and just. For example, laws should be clear, a person must be presumed innocent until proved guilty, criminal justice had to be consistent not arbitrary and, where possible, crime control should be characterised more by reform than by punishment of the body.

The ideas of classical criminology underpin the criminal justice system in most western societies and also make many of the same assumptions as recent approaches to crime control.