

**The Alcoholic Personality.** By VEIKKO TÄHKÄ. 1st Ed. Helsinki: Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies. Volume 13. 1966. Pp. 279. Price not stated.

This is a lengthy monograph by an author who after obtaining his initial psychoanalytic training in Stockholm later worked with Dr. Robert P. Knight at Austin Riggs Centre, Massachusetts, his main interest being the psychodynamic background of alcoholism. He considered that previous investigations into the aetiology of alcoholism gave valid information about alcoholics as a group, but little about subjective motivation and the interdependent mental factors forming the psychological substratum of alcoholism, while psychoanalytic studies in depth gave rise to interesting but unvalidated hypotheses. The aim of the investigation was to fill this gap.

The work starts with a 39-page review of the literature, with particular reference to aetiology. This is followed by the clinical study which is the major part of the work. Fifty alcoholics who were out-patients attending St. Eriks Hospital, Stockholm, in 1953 were investigated. A series of two-hour interviews was held with each patient, the average total time spent being 8½ hours. Eight of the mothers of the patients were similarly interviewed. The Rorschach test was administered to all 50 subjects before the interview. A further 50 Finnish "normal" males were later given a Rorschach test by another investigator and these were compared with the 50 alcoholics. This could not be considered to be an entirely satisfactory matched control group, since in addition to the difference in nationality there were differences in the age groups and occupations of the Finnish subjects.

The greater part of the monograph consists of an assessment of the subjects' personalities in psychodynamic terms in the light of the material obtained at interview and of the Rorschach findings. It was considered that there were many similarities in the alcoholics in the group, in that they showed an oral character disorder in the psychoanalytic sense. Their histories were also considered to show an excessively infantilizing maternal influence and a lack of opportunity for parental identification, leading to development of a predominantly maternal superego.

Though the original investigation was made in 1953, the author has been elaborating it, comparing his findings with previous published work. In view of the amount of data collected and presented, the monograph is lengthy, but it will prove a useful source of information for anyone interested in psychoanalytic or Rorschach findings in alcoholism.

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**Delirium Tremens in Copenhagen.** By JOHANNES NIELSEN. Copenhagen: Munksgaard. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*. Supplement 187 (Vol. 41). 1965. Pp. 92. Price not stated.

This monograph consists of a retrospective study of delirium tremens in Copenhagen over a period of seven years, with a more intensive prospective study lasting one year. It is part of a larger cross-national Nordic study of delirium tremens sponsored by the Nordic Committee for alcohol research.

A preliminary review of the Danish alcohol statistics from 1911 to 1961 had shown a correlation between alcohol price, alcohol consumption and frequency of delirium tremens. A relatively high price of distilled spirits and a relatively low price of beer had been correlated with a low frequency of delirium tremens and a low frequency of deaths from alcoholism.

In the retrospective study, covering five Copenhagen hospitals over seven years, there were 184 cases of delirium tremens and 207 cases of mild incipient delirium tremens. During the years 1954-1959 there was a rise in the consumption of distilled spirits and a corresponding 106 per cent. increase in delirium tremens frequency. The frequency was lower than that in Sweden, which had the highest rate among the Nordic countries.

The major part of the monograph consists of a report of the findings from an intensive study of 42 patients admitted during one year because of delirium tremens. A very careful clinical account is given of these patients who were exhaustively investigated.

The most interesting findings were those with a bearing on aetiology. The mean serum magnesium concentration of 1.52 m.eq./l. in the patients with delirium tremens was significantly lower than the mean of 1.89 m.eq./l. in other alcoholics. S-GOT was elevated in 80 per cent. of the delirium tremens cases, but only 40 per cent. of the other alcoholics, and there was a correlation between elevation of S-GOT and low serum magnesium concentration. As half of the patients had been drinking until the onset of the delirium tremens, the study confirmed that delirium tremens is most probably not a classical "abstinence delirium". The author is careful to state, however, that all studies so far are inconclusive and there is need for further very careful research.

This is an excellent study, which includes a useful review of previous investigations. Anyone interested in alcoholism would be well advised to acquaint himself with this work, as it contains a wealth of information on all aspects of delirium tremens.

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