

Errors in Diagnosis Made by Over-estimation of Catatonic Symptoms
 [Fehldiagnosen durch Überwertung katatonischer Symptome].
 (Zeits. für die ges. Neur. und Psychiat., December, 1924.)
 Becker, Theophil.

In this brief article the author draws on his experience in war pension cases to show that a considerable number of cases were diagnosed during the war as dementia præcox because of the presence of catatonic symptoms, mannerisms, negativism, stereotypy, etc., but recovered completely when the emotional situation leading to this "reactive psychosis" was altered. Many of these proved to be cases of innate psychopathic constitution predisposing them to such a defence reaction. Such cases, he urges, should be considered as due to war service during a first attack, but relapses as due to subsequent environmental difficulties. Many developed on a foundation of a slight degree of feeble-mindedness, and a lowered earning capacity due to such defect should also be considered "not attributable."

He points out that such symptoms in juvenile psychoses should not be regarded as necessarily leading to the diagnosis and bad prognosis of dementia præcox, and that care should be taken not to over-estimate their importance, especially in cases of acute onset associated with strongly emotional incidents or exhaustion.

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The Judgment of Criminal Responsibility in Psychopaths [Die strafrechtliche Beurteilung der Psychopathen]. (Münch. med. Woch., October 3, 1924.) Wittermann, E.

The author discusses the diagnoses made in his institution in cases judged irresponsible for criminal acts on the ground of insanity and divides them into three groups—those collected by his predecessor before 1907, those in whom his predecessor had given an opinion from 1907 to 1917, and his own from 1918 onwards. In these three groups there is a steady decrease of numbers, that decrease being mainly in psychopathic types of case, while the actual psychoses remained a smaller but relatively constant number.

He then considers what constitutes criminal responsibility. According to the German legal code, paragraph 51, it has to be shown that the accused was, at the time of his misdeed, in a state of unconsciousness or other morbid mental state which interfered with voluntary control. Hence it becomes an important question whether and under what circumstances psychopathic states of degeneration must be regarded as insanity in the above legal sense.

He urges that the attitude taken up on this subject by the medical expert has a wide-spread social effect as to the degree to which psychopathic individuals exercise their self-control; previously when they could easily escape from consequences by pleading insanity, with the hope of a speedy discharge from the asylum, a large number of cases shammed states of amnesia, confusion, delusion, etc., which cleared up speedily when punishment was