

*Archiv für Kriminalanthropologie* (vol. xxx). The author starts from the question whether it is possible to differentiate in the general mass of criminals those individuals who suffer from true moral insanity and who ought to benefit by such indulgence as is accorded by the law, to offenders who are mentally diseased. He considers that the problem may be approached in two ways, *vis.*, either by seeking to determine whether in any given case there exists a defect in moral feeling, or on the other hand by directing attention solely to the force of the "intellectual inhibitions" (die intellectuellen Hemmungen.) To proceed by the first way it would be necessary to have some means for fixing the limits of the physiological variation in moral feeling, and no such means are available. There are no direct tests for establishing the pathological character of a defect of moral sensibility; and such indirect evidence as has been suggested, *e.g.*, the detection of co-existing intellectual debility, or of signs of defective physical development, a personal history of precocity in vice, or a family history of nervous taint, and so forth, is necessarily of very doubtful significance, and may—in fact, frequently does—lead competent experts to the most divergent conclusions. On the other hand, the author seems to hold that what he terms the "intellectual moral factors" in the conduct of a criminal are more easily investigated. This part of the paper is very much condensed, but the author indicates that the aim of the medico-legal inquiry should be to ascertain first whether the individual's knowledge of the legal quality of his action is, or is not, defective through any morbid condition, and further whether at the time of the act his power of regulating his conduct in accordance with that knowledge was, or was not, impaired by disease. The author does not make it clear how we are to arrive with the scientific accuracy which he desiderates at this reconstruction of the offender's mental state. The paper is, perhaps, chiefly valuable as a fresh example of the futility of trying to give a psychological meaning to the purely social conception of responsibility.

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*The Question of Racial Degeneration [Zur Entartungsfrage].* (*Zentralbl. f. Nervenheilk. u. Psychiat.*, Oct., 1908.) Kraepelin, E.

One of the most disquieting phenomena of modern times is the steady increase in the number of individuals requiring asylum treatment. Does this indicate an actual increase of insanity, or is it merely to be ascribed to such factors as an earlier recognition of insanity, better care of the insane, ease of entry into asylums, and greater difficulty in keeping insane relatives at home under the stress of modern life? Unfortunately, the available statistics are not sufficient to answer this question, but certain factors may be suggested which are probably causes of racial degeneration.

Travellers agree that insanity is rare amongst uncivilised peoples, but these reports are not altogether trustworthy. A better result is obtained if one considers merely the incidence of particular mental diseases in various races. Owing to the lack of agreement concerning nomenclature, however, practically only general paralysis and alcoholism can be so treated. The observations of the author and others indicate that these diseases are of comparatively rare occurrence amongst uncivilised

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racés. The statistics of Berlin and Munich show that insanity is far more frequent in the town than in the country, and that this is mainly due to the greater incidence of general paralysis and alcoholism. It would appear, therefore, that the large town provides a favourable soil for the development of these diseases. Alcohol may exert a noxious effect upon the developing germ, as also does syphilis. Our increased care for the outcast tends to prevent the natural weeding out of these degenerate offspring.

There are various influences dependent upon the conditions of modern civilisation which tend to injure our mental health. Thus the great increase of duties and responsibilities owing to the growing complexity of the social machine tends to morbid volitional conditions, doubts, phobias, and "grübelucht." It is noteworthy that ideas of self-reproach and self-accusation, so common a symptom in our insanities, are very rare in primitive peoples. Again, the division of labour of a modern state tends to make the individual unduly dependent upon his fellows, and he therefore compares unfavourably with less civilised mankind in sturdy independence and resource. Amongst other factors may be mentioned the lack of hygiene due to the poverty of the lower classes in large towns, and a system of education which devotes itself mainly to pushing the intellectual faculties, while neglecting the volitional, and the requirements of the body.

Lastly, the artificial conditions of modern life tend to divert and distort natural tendencies. We eat when we are not hungry, turn night into day, and hamper the reproductive instincts with restrictions of all kinds.

All these questions are of vital importance for the race, and it is urgently necessary that their precise influence should be determined by properly conducted research. Such research can only be made efficient by calling in the help of the State. BERNARD HART.

*Escapes [Sur les Évasions des Aliénés]. (A Thesis.) Collett, Geo.*

In view of the public outcry against "escapes" from asylums, it is interesting to learn what happens elsewhere.

The particulars relate to those residing at the asylum at Vacluse, and are remarkable for the extraordinary numbers. There were 136 patients who made 94 escapes and 103 attempts to escape during five years, and this occurred in an asylum whose average yearly number was 721!

The following table gives a good summary:

Year.	No. under Treatment.	Total escapes and attempts.	Attempts.	Escapes.
1901	758	51	23	28
1902	784	35	16	19
1903	638	19	11	8
1904	738	52	33	19
1905	688	40	20	20
Total for the five years	3,606	197	103	94

Thus it is seen that 3·7 per cent. of the patients attempted or succeeded in getting away.