

## Chapter 17 — The Moron Problem

from *Race Decadence:  
An Examination of the Causes of Racial Degeneracy in the United States* (1922)

by William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.

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### Sources for Chapter 17, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) “Would Isolate All Morons: Dr. Hickson Urges State Colony for Defectives,” in **Chicago Tribune**, Sept. 27, 1914
- (2) “Restrain Morons for Life Is Dr. Hickson’s Proposal,” in **Chicago Tribune**, Mar. 25, 1918
- (3) William **Healy**, A.B., M.D., *The Individual Delinquent: A Text-Book of Diagnosis and Prognosis for All Concerned in Understanding Offenders* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915)
- (4) Charles B. **Davenport**, *The Feebly Inhibited: Nomadism, or the Wandering Impulse, with Special Reference to Heredity* (Washington, D.C., Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1915)

### Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Bold type** indicates passages which Sadler copied verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from an uncited source.

- (f) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book.
- (g) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake, in most cases brought about by Sadler's miscopying or misunderstanding his source.

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## XVII — THE MORON PROBLEM

17:0.1 HAVING given consideration to the less serious nervous disorders, and, in the preceding chapter, considered certain phases of feeble-mindedness, we must now turn our attention to the more troublesome and the more dangerous element of the whole feeble-minded class—the morons—the more intelligent and, therefore, more unsocial group of defectives and delinquents.

### HEREDITY A STRONG FACTOR

“WOULD ISOLATE ALL MORONS”  
(*Chicago Tribune* 1914 13)

#### Heredity Strong Factor.

“In cases involving illegitimate children,” continued Dr. Hickson,

60 per cent of the girls are mentally defective.”

This is an important discovery, as every one realizes how often adopted children go wrong.

It upholds our theory that heredity is the intrinsic cause of feeble-mindedness, while environment is an extrinsic cause.

17:1.1 “In cases involving illegitimate children,

60 per cent of the girls are mentally defective”—

they are largely morons.

This is an important discovery, as everyone realizes how often adopted children go wrong.

It upholds our theory that heredity is the intrinsic cause of feeble-mindedness, while environment is but an extrinsic cause.

Of the prostitutes examined in the Chicago Morals Court,

## SOURCE

**Eighty-four per cent** of the prostitutes examined in the Morals court **were found to be subnormal mentally** (CT 13).

[contd] **“One interesting fact brought to light was that the lower the mentality the earlier the boys get into the toils of the law.**

Nearly all of them are habitual cigaret smokers, and a small percentage use cocaine and morphine” (CT 13).

“RESTRAIN MORONS FOR LIFE IS DR. HICKSON’S PROPOSAL” (*Chicago Tribune* 1918 12)

Community Pays Big Bill.

In his conclusions **Dr. Hickson says he is more and more convinced that psychopathy determines crime and that intelligence affects the nature of it.**

**Concerning the criminal tendencies of the defective the physician says:**

“We are therefore able to predict that with the exception of the lightest grades of dementia praecox and the higher grades of the feeble-minded, who make up the occasional criminal, that the others are all marked for slaughter; that they cannot adjust themselves to a normal environment” (CT 12).

See Small Hope for Defectives.

[contd] **“Mental defectiveness (moronism) is hereditary and constitutional, and consequently not amenable to our preachings, asylums, hospitals, reformatories, penitentiaries, etc.**

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

**84 per cent were found to be subnormal mentally.**

17:1.2 **One interesting fact brought to light was that the lower the mentality the earlier the boys get into the toils of the law.**

“Nearly all of them are habitual cigarette smokers, and a small percentage use cocaine and morphine.”

17:1.3 **Dr. Hickson says that he is more and more convinced that psychopathy determines crime and that intelligence merely affects the nature of it.**

**Concerning the criminal tendencies of the defective this physician says:**

“We are therefore able to predict that with the exception of the lightest grades of dementia praecox and the higher grades of the feeble-minded, who make up the occasional criminal, that the others are all marked for slaughter; that they cannot adjust themselves to a normal environment.”

17:1.4 **Mental defectiveness (moronism) is hereditary and constitutional, and consequently not amenable to our preachings, asylums, hospitals, reformatories, penitentiaries, etc.**

## SOURCE

We must ever bear in mind that each year a new quota of defectives is born with statistical regularity.

They pass through the hands of parents, then the pedagogues, the theologians, the physicians, the social workers, the employers, the courts, the prisons, and back on society,

each one in turn passing them up to the next, and no one willing to acknowledge their impotency in the face of this plague of mental defectiveness” (CT 12).

“WOULD ISOLATE ALL MORONS”  
(*Chicago Tribune* 1914 13)

### *Dr. Hickson's Definitions*

Dr. William J. Hickson, director of the psychopathological laboratory of the Municipal court ... (CT 13).

**Idiot**—Person having mentality equivalent to that of 1 to 3 year old child.

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

We must ever bear in mind that each year a new quota of defectives is born with statistical regularity.

They pass through the hands of their parents, then the pedagogues, the theologians, the physicians, the social workers, the employers, the courts, the prisons, and back on society,

each one in turn passing them up to the next, and no one willing to acknowledge their impotency in the face of this plague of mental defectiveness.

## DEFINITION OF MORONISM

17:2.1 When we come to study the moron it will be necessary to define the term—probably wise to define a number of associated terms in this connection, so that the reader may gain an idea as to just where the moron comes in the long scale of nervous defectives and mental degenerates.

17:2.2 Dr. W. J. Hickson, of Chicago's Municipal Court Psychopathic Laboratory,

offers the following definitions of idiot, imbecile, moron, and sociopath:

17:2.3 1. *Idiot*.—Person having mentality equivalent to that of a 1 to 3 year old child.

## SOURCE

**Imbecile**—Adult with 3 to 8 year old mentality.

**Moron**—Mentality of from 8 to 12 years.

**Sociopath**—Mentality above that of normal 12 year old, but so defective that it is not able to maintain individual independently (CT 13).

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

17:2.4 2. *Imbecile*.—Adult with 3 to 8 years mentality.

17:2.5 3. *Moron*.—Mentality of from 8 to 12 years.

17:2.6 4. *Sociopath*.—Mentality above that of normal 12 year old, but so defective that it is not able to maintain individual independence.

This group of subnormal and abnormal persons—taken as a whole, may be called “feeble-minded,” “half-wits,” etc., and as such have already been discussed in the preceding chapter, but at this time we desire to classify and study the morons, or sociopaths.

17:2.7 The author would classify—roughly—all subnormal persons with a mentality of 8 years and above as morons, those ranging from 8 to 12 years as “low-grade” morons, and those ranging from 12 years up to nearer normal as “high-grade” morons, or sociopaths.

It should be remembered that the simple feeble-minded individual makes little trouble for society. It is the feeble-minded person subject to *emotional disturbances* at varying intervals who lapses into vice, violence, and crime.

## MORON STATISTICS

17:3.1 It is estimated that Illinois has about 25,000 feeble-minded. Of this number only about 2,000 are under proper supervision or restraint. Illinois ranks twenty-third among the states in its care for morons.

[Source?]

## SOURCE

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

Massachusetts leads; then come Ohio, Minnesota, and Iowa. There are thought to be about 400,000 of this defective type in the United States.

[Source?]

17:3.2 British statistics say that there is one moron for every 217 people in England.

[Source?]

17:3.3 Between 2.5 and 3 per cent of the men examined for the army were of the moron or feeble-minded type. Men were accepted for foreign service who measured mentally up to 10 years, and for domestic service up to 8 years.

17:3.4 There are only two remedies for these alarming conditions, isolation or segregation, and sterilization. It is maintained that the latter does not prevent criminal assaults; and on the whole segregation in supervised colonies seems to present the ideal method of handling these higher grades of feeble-mindedness or moronism, as **at least two-thirds** of all these cases are hereditary. **Isolation during the childbearing period of all morons would in thirty-three years, I believe, practically solve this problem.** It is the only thing to do, but at present we have no places for such isolation. Our first business should be to provide such places.

“RESTRAIN MORONS FOR LIFE IS  
DR. HICKSON’S PROPOSAL”  
(**Chicago Tribune 1918** 12)

**Community Pays Big Bill.**

17:3.5 Our present system of handling morons and other high-grade defectives and degenerates is highly extravagant.

## SOURCE

[contd] Inferentially, the reports indicates that the present system of handling defective criminals is extremely costly in a financial as well as a social way

The only figures offered are in connection with the sentencing of 1,536 defendants in the house of correction in the Boys' court.

**This monetary expense is placed at \$1,845,600 (CT 12).**

[Note: \$1,845,600 divided by 1,536 = \$1,201.56.]

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

Our system of handling defective criminals is extremely costly in both a financial and a social way.

Let us take the figures offered in connection with the sentencing of 1,536 defendants to the House of Correction in the Boys' Court of Chicago.

**This monetary expense is placed at \$1,845,600.**

This means that it actually costs about \$1,200 to send a boy to the House of Correction. Would it not pay better to put this money into the more scientific program of permanent isolation for these defectives who are potential criminals?

## “BACKWARDNESS” AND “DULLNESS”

17:4.1 The out-and-out moron must not be confused with the “backward child.”

## VII: WORKING METHODS— *Continued* (Healy 104)

§84. E. Classification from Tests. (Healy 112)

What we mean by mental subnormality is set forth with some attempt at exactness in our chapter on Mental Defect. The class entitled, “Dull, perhaps from physical causes,” is intended to form a temporary pigeon-hole for the class of cases that Witmer (142) and Holmes (141) have done so much to emphasize (H 14).

Many youths are “dull” from physical causes alone.



## SOURCE

Perhaps with remedy of the physical conditions there will be a show of mental betterment, or perhaps not.

**Physical causes include general poor physical conditions, over-use of narcotics and stimulants, bad sex habits, arrested development, and epilepsy** (H 114).

**It should be remembered from the start that epilepsy may be correlated with anything from supernormality to idiocy and insanity,**

**and that sometimes an apparent mental defect may clear up under successful treatment for this disease** (H 114).

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

In many cases it is impossible to determine whether the apparent “backwardness” or “dullness” is inherent or due to some physical disorder.

With the removal of the physical conditions, many of these individuals will show marked improvement.

**Physical causes include general poor physical conditions, overuse of narcotics and stimulants, bad sex habits, arrested development, and epilepsy.**

**It should be remembered that epilepsy may be associated with anything from supernormality to idiocy and insanity,**

**and that sometimes an apparent mental defect may clear up under successful treatment for this disease.**

Without a proper and competent examination, we must not diagnose apparent “backwardness” and “dullness”—even stupidity—as moronism. Only those defective individuals who are such from heredity are to be regarded as falling into the class of morons. And it should be remembered that it is the moron who constitutes the potential criminal class.

## CONSTITUTIONAL INFERIORITY

### XIX: PSYCHIC CONSTITUTIONAL INFERIORITY (Healy 575)

§290. **Definition.**—Psychic constitutional inferiority may be recognized by chronic abnormal social and mental reactions to the ordinary conditions of life, on the part of one who cannot be classified in any of the groups of the insanities, neuroses, or mental defectives (H 575).

§291. **Characteristics.**—The general characteristic of the constitutional inferior is abnormal reaction to some of the ordinary stimuli of life.

Unusual emotional reactions are almost universal in the members of this class.

They are often egocentric, selfish, irritable, very suggestible, easily fatigued mentally.

Sometimes they are possessed by an abnormal feeling of impotence.

They may be slightly defective in intelligence or have light, specialized defects of ability, but very often tests reveal neither defect nor peculiarity.

Indeed some members of this class may be regarded as distinctly bright, even geniuses, although weak in power to meet the steady demands of the world (H 576-77).

On the functional side these individuals are notoriously subject to 'general nervousness.'

17:5.1 Psychic constitutional inferiority may be recognized by chronic abnormal social and mental reactions to the ordinary conditions of life, on the part of one who cannot be classified in any of the groups of the insanities, neuroses, or mental defectives.—Healy.

17:5.2 The general characteristic of the constitutionally inferior is abnormal reaction to some of the ordinary stimuli of life.

Unusual emotional reactions are almost universal in the members of this class.

They are often eccentric, selfish, irritable, very suggestible, and easily fatigued.

They have a general incapacity for doing things.

They may be slightly defective in intelligence or have light, specialized defects of ability, but very often tests reveal neither defect nor peculiarity.

Indeed some members of this class may be regarded as distinctly bright, even geniuses, although weak in power to meet the steady demands of the world.

17:5.3 On the functional side these individuals are notoriously subject to "general nervousness."

## SOURCE

Specifically, we may find tremors, facial or other tics (habit spasms), nystagmoid movements of the eyes, headaches, little attacks of dizziness, enuresis prolonged throughout childhood, and so on.

**The organs of the special senses are particularly apt to show signs of inferiority; defective vision is very common (H 577).**

§295. **Degeneracy.**—The relationship of so-called degeneracy to this class is important.... **It is undoubtedly true that most of these constitutional inferiors may be regarded as degenerates,**

**but many of the so-called degenerates belong to other classes (H 588).**

§296. **Treatment.**—**The treatment of the constitutional inferior resolves itself down to very careful oversight and patient education, particularly during the years of adolescence.**

**Permanent colonization is needed for many of them (H 589).**

“RESTRAIN MORONS FOR LIFE IS DR. HICKSON’S PROPOSAL”  
(*Chicago Tribune* 1918 12)

**Dementia Praecox Afflicts 700.**

[contd] Of the number examined by Dr. Hickson and his assistants,

**nearly 700 were found to be suffering from dementia praecox.**

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

“Specifically, we may find tremors, facial or other tics (habit spasms), abnormal movements of the eyes, headaches, little attacks of dizziness, enuresis, prolonged throughout childhood, and so on.”

**The organs of the special senses are particularly apt to show signs of inferiority; defective vision is very common.**

17:5.4 **It is undoubtedly true that most of these constitutional inferiors may be regarded as degenerates,**

**but many of the so-called degenerates belong to other classes.**

17:5.5 **The treatment of the constitutionally inferior resolves itself down to very careful oversight and patient education, particularly during the years of adolescence.**

**Permanent colonization is needed for most of them.**

## DEMENTIA PRAECOX

17:6.1 Of the total number of mental defectives examined in recent years at the Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago,

**nearly 700 were found to be suffering from dementia praecox.**

## SOURCE

Few of this group, according to the laboratory findings, can be reformed.

A specific study of eighty-five individual cases in which the defendants were held to the grand jury and later sent to the Pontiac reformatory from the Criminal court, shows that all had been former offenders—some of them having been charged with twelve offenses.

In one Pontiac case the boy defendant was indicted on twenty-three hold-up and larceny charges.

He was of average intelligence, with dementia praecox (CT 12).

XX: MENTAL ABERRATION (Healy 590)

MAJOR PSYCHOSES. (Healy 592)

§ 298. *Dementia Praecox.* (Healy 592)

The disease takes on various forms, and the evidences of actual dementia may not be plain at first.

The early signs of this disorder which bring individuals suffering from it so frequently to the notice of police officials, visiting nurses, social workers, etc., are often those of extreme shyness and fear.

Sufferers are almost always males.

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

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A specific study of eighty-five individual cases, in which the defendants were held to the grand jury and later sent to the Pontiac Reformatory from the Criminal Court, shows that all had been former offenders—some of them having been charged with twelve offenses.

In one Pontiac case the boy defendant was indicted on twenty-three holdup and larceny charges.

He was of average intelligence, with the exception of having dementia praecox.

17:6.2 Dementia praecox is really a form of insanity—usually making its appearance around the time of adolescence; but also showing up sometimes at a later time in life.

The disease takes on various forms, and the evidences of actual insanity may not be plain at first.

The early signs of this disorder which bring individuals suffering from it so frequently to the notice of police officials, visiting nurses, social workers, etc., are often those of extreme shyness and fear.

Sufferers are almost always males.

## SOURCE

The young man will not go out of doors or meet company.

He will not seek a job. He cannot face a prospective employer.

**He seems utterly ashamed of himself and his own shortcomings, and may hide even from his own family.**

Many times we have heard the account of just such actions implicating individuals who are serious offenders, perhaps offering violence to their own families or to others, perhaps being thieves and young embezzlers.

Variations in the way of excitement, utter dullness, and paranoidal symptoms

are seen during the course of this disease (H 593).

**One feature of importance in the evolution of this disease is the practice of masturbation.**

**With astonishing frequency cases of dementia praecox indulge excessively in bad sex habits.**

**This is so noticeable that it is often difficult to convince parents that the disease itself is not caused by this practice** (H 593).

**The idea of suicide is frequently entertained in cases of dementia praecox** (H 593).

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

The young man dislikes to go out-of-doors, or meet strangers.

He will not look for a job—he shrinks from meeting a prospective employer.

**He seems utterly ashamed of himself and his own shortcomings, and may hide even from his own family.**

They often resort to violence

when coercion is attempted.

Variations in the form of excitement, together with utter dullness,

may appear during the course of this disease.

17:6.3 **One feature of importance in the evolution of this disease is the practice of masturbation.**

**With astonishing frequency cases of dementia praecox indulge excessively in bad sex habits.**

**This is so noticeable that it is often difficult to convince parents that the disease itself is not caused by this practice.**

**The idea of suicide is frequently entertained in cases of dementia praecox.**

**PROPOSED MORON COLONY**

17:7.1 All experts in juvenile crime are agreed that the ordinary processes of criminal prosecution are not applicable to these mentally subnormal offenders. They are equally agreed that the state-managed colony or farm is the ideal method of handling these defectives.

“WOULD ISOLATE ALL MORONS”  
(*Chicago Tribune* 1914 13)

Dr. William J. Hickson ... declared that proof of mental deficiency should immediately preclude a criminal prosecution. He urges the establishment of an industrial colony for feeble-minded youths, known as socipaths.

“I think the citizens of Chicago would find such a colony the greatest boon of years,” said Dr. Hickson. “It would materially reduce crime,

and I don’t see why it wouldn’t make possible a reduction in the police force (CT 13).

Such a colony would not only materially reduce crime

but would also reduce the police force of any great city,

thus benefiting from such an arrangement, to such an extent as to contribute an enormous sum annually toward creating and maintaining such a farm-colony for these defectives.

**Take Burden Off Society.**

[contd] “In such a colony they would be 60 to 70 per cent efficient,

and the institution would be two-thirds self-supporting.

17:7.2 In such a colony these morons and other subnormals would be 60 to 70 per cent efficient,

and the institution would be at least two-thirds self-supporting.

## SOURCE

**It is much more costly to have these fellows around loose, holding people up, breaking into stores, and attacking young girls.**

**They have the minds of 10 to 12 year old children, and the instincts of adults.**

They have no insight or foresight, and they try to provide for themselves by direct means,

whereas we

As one man said to me,

‘We are the more clever criminals’” (*CT* 13).

[contd] **“The laws should be changed,”** continued Dr. Hickson.

**“Under the German code, if mental disease is proven, there is no criminal deed committed.**

**The judge turns the prisoner over to the psychiatrist.**

**It means a big saving in the machinery of the law and saves the befuddling of the juries by ‘expert’ testimony...”** (*CT* 13).

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

**It is much more costly to have these fellows around loose, holding people up, breaking into stores, and attacking young girls.**

**They have the minds of 10 to 12 year old children, and all the instincts of adults.**

“They have no insight or foresight, and they try to provide for themselves by direct means,

whereas we—

the average or normal individuals—

adopt more roundabout methods of making a living,

as someone has said,

‘We are the more clever criminals.’”

17:7.3 **The laws should be changed.**

**Under the German code, if mental disease is proven, there is no criminal deed committed.**

**The judge turns the prisoner over to the psychiatrist.**

**It means a big saving in the machinery of the law and saves the befuddling of the juries by so-called “expert” testimony.**

17:7.4 ■ A moron can never safely live in a community. They must be isolated, segregated, and under constant supervision. We have in this country excellent commitment laws based on the English code, but there is no provision made for places to commit them. ■

17:7.5 We believe that the most important legislation now pending in this country is to provide adequate farm-colonies for these moron defectives, as some states have begun to provide the long-needed epileptic colonies.

### “THE FEEBLY INHIBITED”

[Note: Davenport’s “Violent Temper and Its Inheritance” was published in the Sep. 1915 issue of *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*. It was the first of his three studies on the Feebly Inhibited. The second study focused on Nomadism.]

17:8.1 While many of the victims of violent temper—those individuals who greatly lack in self-control—may belong to the moron class, at the same time, we are forced to recognize that many of these badly controlled persons are not definitely feeble-minded. Davenport and his associates have shown, by painstaking investigation, that many of these turbulent persons belong to the “feebly inhibited” type—a group which directly inherits its tendency, but which, on the whole, is not markedly defective, from a standpoint of general intelligence.

### VI: INHERITANCE OF THE NOMAD- IC TENDENCY. (Davenport 20)

The disposition to wander away from home, manifested by some children, the tramping or nomadic instinct which characterizes many individuals—not to mention races—together with many other subnormal tendencies, are found, on careful investigation, to be the result of



## SOURCE

Thus all the evidence supports the hypothesis that the nomadic impulse depends upon the absence of a simple sex-linked gene that “determines” domesticity (D 23).

## 17: RACE DECADENCE

the hereditary absence of certain factors which enable the normal individual to inhibit, control, and suppress many of these instinctive nomadic or violent temperamental tendencies.

And there can be little doubt that the American population is becoming saturated with an increasing number of these mildly abnormal individuals, who, taken as a class, belong to this group of the so-called “feebly inhibited,” and we have every reason to believe that, in common with the other and serious forms of defectiveness and degeneracy, these milder and less violently anti-social groups are increasingly appearing in our population at the present time.

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

1. To society, the morons represent the more dangerous element of all classes of defectives and degenerates.

2. In the case of girls having illegitimate children, 60 per cent are mentally defective morons. This may explain why so many of these adopted children go wrong.

3. Psychopathy largely determines crime—intelligence merely affects the nature and extent of it.

4. Moronism is hereditary and therefore constitutional. It is not going to be influenced by preaching, asylums, or reformatories.

5. It should be remembered that the moron possesses a mentality ranging from 8 years up to 12. Those from 12 years up (but not normal) are sometimes called “high-grade” morons.

6. Of 25,000 feeble-minded in Illinois, only 2,000 are under restraint. There are probably 400,000 morons in the United States; one moron for every 217 population in England.

7. Three per cent of those examined for the army belong to the morons or similarly defective type; and two-thirds of these cases are hereditary.

8. It actually costs the city of Chicago \$1,200 to send a moron to the House of Correction. How long will it take us to find a better way to handle these defectives?

9. The moron must not be confused with the "backward" child, nor with those who are just "dull" from temperamental or physical causes.

10. Some cases are difficult to classify and are put into group called "constitutionally inferior." They are chiefly emotional and nervous.

11. Dementia praecox is really a form of insanity, making its appearance around adolescence. It predominates among males.

12. Praecox patients are usually shy, unsocial, shirk responsibility, masturbate, and often resort to violence if coerced.

13. The ideal method of caring for morons would be a properly conducted farm-colony, where these social misfits could be 60 per cent efficient and self-supporting.

14. A moron can never safely live in a civilized community. Money and lives could both be saved if these defectives were sanely and scientifically handled.

15. In addition to morons, we have a vast group of "feebly inhibited" individuals, embracing the nomadic type and the little-controlled temperamental group.

**SOURCE**

**17: RACE DECADENCE**

16. The American population is becoming increasingly saturated with these various sorts of defectives and degenerates.