A REFERENCE ANALYSIS ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL

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Abstract: "The nervous and mental illnesses, prevention and treatment", a work of the former doctor Aurel Dobrescu from Braşov, is one of the most interesting book edited by “Medical ASTRA”, and it is an analyse of the human soul, of the normal life against the sick life

Key words: manuscript, Dobrescu, ASTRA

The book was edited in 1919 and one year later was awarded by the Romanian Academy. It has 163 pages and it addresses to the general audience with new information about neurology and psychiatry. It has a special part about developing the child’s mind, and it is of a real use for teachers and parents.

The knowledge of nervous system’s structure and physiology represents the fundament of all nervous phenomenon, dr. Dobrescu presents in his study some general issues, then reflexes and instincts and in the end the analyzes of the most abstract psychological activities.

First part of the book is called "Generalities about the nervous system" and it has 5 chapters.

Chapter 1, “The knowledge of the brain, throw which the soul’s life is produced, is necessary for everybody” highlights the importance of discovering the human brain’s secrets.
The next chapter “The new direction of psychology to laboratory and clinic” follows the evolution of psychology in a new direction, from simple auto-intuitive observation to laboratory and clinic methods and in the end to helping methods as intoxications and hypnotism. Following the new direction, the author studied the psychology of the child, abnormal people, primitive populations, criminals and animals.

Considering that "a psychology which wouldn’t consider all the actual data were collected from these new sources of knowledge, is obsolete and narrows the horizon of modern man", the author stresses the importance of evolution in science.

Chapter 3 of the first part concludes: “Psychology proposed in nowadays schools is too theoretical” and recommends the use only of real data of physiology of the nervous system in textbooks, and then to study the causes, forms and means of preventing illness and treatment of nervous diseases. In Chapter 4 we find that mental illness “however would be kaleidoscopic, are caused by the illness of a single organ, the brain”.

The next chapter of the first part, "The significance of the brain” shows that differences between humans and animals due to more complex structure of the human brain.

The second part studies in 6 chapters the main functions of the nervous system.

The first chapter presents, over 5 pages, the nervous cell, part of the nervous system. As the author states, "the nerve cell, the neuron, is composed of the actual cell and one or more threads that hang from it" Also, in this chapter, the author makes a distribution of the nervous system's tasks between sensory nerves, motor nerves, sympathetic nerves and central nervous system, which, in turn, is subdivided into large brain, hindbrain and spinal cord.
The next chapter, Chapter 2, is called "The reflex" and is defined as "the simplest form of collaboration between different kinds of neurons". If for the animals the reflex plays a major role, in human reflexes are controlled by the brain and replaced with complex mental processes.

Chapter 3 presents the importance of instincts, which often break the barriers of reason, being inherited from generation to generation within the same species.

"The superior reflex (controlled)" is the title of the fourth chapter of the second part and presents the reflex circuit in which the impulse passes from peripheral sensory nerves to sensory nerves connecting the spinal cord to the brain; from hear, the impulse reaches the muscles, which according to the decision taken by the brain, will move or not.

Another chapter is titled "Locating the brain faculties". Here there are presented sensations reaching the brain and are printed at this level in the form of impressions, which, if the same kind, forms images. The images are grouped into concepts; concepts are divided into "faculties of intellect, feeling and will".

Chapter 6 highlights "The map of the brain centers". Thus, "motor centers" are represented on the map corresponding to body parts and their illness it causes weakness or paralysis. "Intelligence is established throughout the cortex" and it is the resultant of the images and representations received by the senses.

In Part III we take "a special look on the functioning of the nervous system".

Chapter 1 provides the data "from the intimate life of the nervous system", thus being presented the evolution of our neurons as cells which develop many branches as they grow. The neurons’ nutrition occurs through the process of assimilation, oxygen having a major role in this case.

In Chapter 2 we learn "how to develop spiritual life". As muscle fibers increase after physical activity, "nerve elements continually grow and strengthen" following receipt, selection and setting processes of the concepts. These findings were very useful in education and also in the fact that in some children some centers are more susceptible to impressions and other are more rudimentary. Hence, the author concludes: "education wouldn't be made after a general block, but for each student's individuality".
Chapter 3 presents "the scheme of a psychological process". We'll see how sensory nerves transmit information to association centers, which, together with the memory centers and then via motor nerves will produce movement.

In Chapter 4 we see a part "of the problems of intelligence" and find that the number of neurons you have at birth does not increase during life, innate concepts don't exist and genius and insanity are related.

Part IV deals with "General pathology of the nervous system".

Chapter 1 describes the causes of diseases of nerve substance; in inherited diseases, they will be worse if taken from the mother, and if true psychopaths, they are born of both parents sick. Among won causes are the infectious diseases considered "among the greatest enemies of mankind", typhoid fever, articular rheumatism, erysipelas, Staphylococcus, Streptococcus, smallpox and pneumonia. The social poisons mentioned are alcohol, opium, cocaine, hashish. Diseases of endocrine glands are also included in the category of causes; from that type is education "too wanton and too early", that can lead to insanity. Emotions or spiritual kicks are occasional cases in individuals with predisposition for nervous diseases.

Part V studies "most common forms of sickness of the nervous system", which are divided into peripheral nerve diseases and diseases of the nervous center.

Chapter 1 considered "peripheral nerve illness", the main causes of disease being cold, compression, blow, degeneration, acute or chronic infectious disease toxins. Illness is made by inflammation and muscles corresponding to these nerves will become atrophic, and will regenerate following cessation of the inflammation. Sensory nerve disease will produce anesthesia or callousness and neuralgia or nerve pain. The disease will cause motor nerve paralysis.

In Chapter 2 we learn that "Treatment of the illness of peripheral nerves" should be above all a treatment of the factors that cause the disease: rheumatism, syphilis, alcoholism, infectious disease, diabetes. Treatment usually consists of electrifying, warm baths, hot compresses, ointments and Belladona extract opium, narcotics and not least, a substantially diet.

In Chapter 3 are presented "Diseases of central nervous system" as being divided into functional diseases and organic diseases.

The next chapter is entitled "General symptoms of diseases of central nervous system" and treats disorders of the sphere of intellect in 7 pages (illusion, hallucination, disturbance of consciousness, eclipsing intellectual life, stupor, obsessions, phobias, paranoid ideas, anger), disturbances in the sphere of sense (the soul, apathy, hypetimia) and disturbances in the sphere of the will (aboulia, feverish excitement, catalepsy, catatonia, impulsive actions, impulsive obsession).

Chapter 5 is of great complexity and studies the functional diseases, and the organic ones.
The study begins with functional nervous disease, defined as "state of constant fatigue and irritability" following the weakening of the nervous system. The main symptoms of mild neurasthenia are the headaches, pain in the spinal cord, insomnia, digestive disorders followed by significant decrease in weight, angina pectoris. In patients with psychopathic predisposition will appear serious neurasthenia characterized by weakening memory, phobias appearance, imagination and fantasy taking the place of rational thinking.

Ipocondria is considered an obsessive analysis of the bodily condition, these patients being considered "imaginative sick people". An important part of this chapter is given to hysteria, the disease of "slightly irritable, very significantly, whims, falling quickly from one extreme to another". Symptoms of hysteria are varied and sensory nerves are affected by anesthesia and hyperesthesia, motor nerves by lack of activity or by contractions of muscles. Epilepsy, mania, melancholy, paranoia and madness are the last functional diseases described briefly in this chapter.

In organic diseases are studied idiocy, imbecility, cretinism, dementia, senile and especially alcoholism. In the following pages is the presentation of the forms of alcoholic psychosis: delirium, regular drunkenness, alcoholic dementia etc.

The next topic is the influence of toxic syphilis on nervous system, leading to the progressive general paralysis, "an organic disease of the entire central nervous system, which arises in people who have been infected with syphilis" through fiber atrophy and degeneration of nerve cells. Another consequence of the ill with syphilis, is described in the following lines. Last of organic nerve diseases studied is apoplexy or cerebral hemorrhage, known as "damblaua" produced by tearing of arteries in the brain. We will stop to analyze the clinical picture for dorsal tabes, while trying to present known data in 1919 and that we have today about.
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<tr>
<th>Dorsal tabes</th>
<th>Dobrescu’s book</th>
<th>In current work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Destruction of peripheral sensory neurons and their continuation of the spinal cord.</td>
<td>Demyelination of posterior cords, dorsal roots and dorsal roots ganglia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>Uncertainty walk, slouch, atactic</td>
<td>Gait ataxia with broad base of support and stepaj</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Killer pain in legs and torso</td>
<td>Loss of pain sensitivity</td>
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<td>Joint degeneration, atrophic, perforated ulcers of the leg</td>
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<td>Pupil small, irregular, which reacts to accommodation but not light</td>
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<tr>
<th>Illusion</th>
<th>Dobrescu’s book</th>
<th>In current psychiatric books</th>
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<td></td>
<td>The patient receives via the senses all sorts of feelings about the things around him, but he exaggerates illness nerve centers, it turned into images that do not correspond to reality</td>
<td>In a false perception of real sensory stimuli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucination</td>
<td>The patient cause in nerve centers an image, without having received any outside perception</td>
<td>False perception, failure in the absence of actual sensory stimulus</td>
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| Tabel. 1. – Comparing the data from Dobrescu Book with the modern book |

Comparing data on disorders of intellect and the will of the book of Dr. Dobrescu with what we know today about the same concept, we see that differences are not large at all.

| Tabel. 2. – Comparing the data from Dobrescu Book with the modern book |

Part VI deals with "prevention nervous system's diseases".

Chapter 1 presents "the means of education" for prevention of these diseases: the fight against sexual diseases, combating alcoholism and overwork, the gym, exercise and trips.

Chapter 2 highlights the role of spiritual education in preventing nerve diseases. The purpose of education is "to strengthen the will of the student, which can deal anytime with his impulses". It studies the importance of training character and temperament and the role of the character in preventing nerve diseases. Concluding,
Dr. Dobrescu says that "a strong character, meaning a mind that deals with tendencies and agitation (...) can do a lot to prevent nerve diseases".

Part VII deals with the study of nervous diseases’ treatment. The author proposes treatment regimens in patients with nervous breakdown, the scheme which will include ensuring peace for the patient, removing him from the environment, food care, idrotherapeutic, electrotherapeutic and psychotherapeutic treatment, general treatment for strengthening. In the following pages of the Treaty are discussed at length all these therapeutic methods.

Part VIII, the last part of this study is a warning, stating "how a family degenerate" by the appearance and inheritance of nerve diseases. Concluding, the author states that "the power of a nation depends on the ethical value of families", highlighting the importance of prevention and treatment of nervous diseases.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the development of the human race, as is clear even from the author's words: "In preparing this book, besides a brief appearance of normal and pathological mental life and the prevention and treatment of nervous diseases, I set one more goal: to draw attention to the significance of some agents of mental diseases on future generations; that is my contribution to the improvement of the human race".

Concluding, the book is a good example of the concerns of representatives of ASTRA in medicine.

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