

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

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EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For the following qualifications:-

B.A.

Hist. Of Medic. C120: Theme of Degeneration

COURSE CODE : **HMEDC120**

UNIT VALUE : **1.00**

DATE : **09-MAY-02**

TIME : **10.00**

TIME ALLOWED : **3 hours**

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TURN OVER

THREE HOURS

Please answer question ONE and any TWO other questions

1. Comment on any THREE of the following:
 - (a) Between the intellectual condition of the lowest Bosjesman and the most civilised European there is much less difference than between the same European and this degenerate being, in whom arrest of development is due to cerebral atrophy, congenital or acquired or to any other cause inducing the morbid state which we designate by the name of idiocy, imbecility or dementia. – B.A. MOREL, - 1857
 - (b) In proportion as the whole of the past evolution of civilised man, of which we at present perceive the outlines, is assigned to its causes, we and our successors on the globe may expect to be able duly to estimate that which makes for, and that which makes against, the progress of the race. The full and earnest cultivation of Science – the Knowledge of Causes – is that to which we have to look for the protection of our race – even of this English branch of it – from relapse and degeneration. – E. RAY LANKESTER, - 1880
 - (c) The fact must be accepted and we must depart from our otherwise legitimate incredulity and say ‘So be it!’ Here is a woman who on the one hand has syphilis without *having shown a primary lesion*; on the other, has been infected by her husband *without this husband having had any contagious symptom*. What then is the mystery? – ALFRED FOURNIER, - 1881
 - (d) We have held out a helping hand to the weak but at the same time we have to a large extent suspended the automatic action whereby a race progressed mentally and physically. Surely here is an antinomy – a fundamental opposition between medical progress and the science of national eugenics, of race efficiency...I venture to think it is an antinomy and will remain one until the nation at large recognises as a fundamental doctrine the principle that everyone, being born, has the right to live, but the right to live does not in itself convey the right to everyone to reproduce their kind. – KARL PEARSON, 1912
 - (e) Anomalies of the sexual functions are met with especially in civilised races. This fact is explained in part by the frequent abuse of the sexual organs and in part by the circumstance that such functional anomalies are chiefly the sign of an inherited diseased condition of the central nervous system (‘functional signs of degeneration’). Since the generative organs stand in important functional relation to the entire nervous system, and especially to its psychic and somatic functions, the frequency of general neuroses and psychoses arising in sexual functional or organic disturbances is easy to understand. – R. von KRAFFT-EBING, 1903

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- (f) The activity of the imaginative writer therefore is incomparably more than that of the artist, essentially personal; the elaboration of sense-impressions into representations and the translation of representations into words are so peculiarly individual, so exclusively subjective that for this cause also imaginative writing can never be reality itself, i.e. 'realistic'. – MAX NORDAU, 1895
- (g) Alienists have noted certain characters which very frequently, though not constantly, accompany these fatal degenerations. Such are on the moral side, apathy, loss of moral sense, frequent tendencies to impulsiveness or doubt, psychical inequalities owing to the excess of some faculty (memory, aesthetic taste etc) or defect of other qualities (calculation, for example), exaggerated mutism or verbosity, morbid vanity, excessive originality, and excessive preoccupation with the self, the tendency to put mystical interpretations on the simplest facts, the abuse of symbolism and of special words which are used as an almost exclusive mode of expression. Such, on the physical side, are prominent ears, deficiency of beard, irregularity of teeth, excessive asymmetry of face and head which may be very large or very small, sexual precocity, smallness or disproportion of the body, left-handedness, stammering, phthisis, excessive fecundity – neutralised afterwards by abortions or complete sterility, with constant aggravations of abnormalities in the children. – C. LOMBROSO, 1891
2. 'Charles Darwin and T H Huxley had differing but still personal ways of avoiding a clear statement of the implications of evolution by natural selection for the social and political order'. Debate this proposal.
 3. How might one see the details of Morel's Treatise of 1857 as setting out a coherent plan for social regeneration?
 4. What did Nietzsche think had to be 'overcome' if modern decadence were to end?
 5. 'Except for a few marginalised liberals and socialists, all writers on war in this period saw its various forms and various arenas as inevitable, necessary and honourable'. Discuss.
 6. In what ways did sexologists, and Havelock Ellis in particular, resist degenerationist explanations of sexual 'perversions'.
 7. 'Alcoholism seemed to many to be one potentially tractable problem in the depressing morass of degeneration and decay' (W F Bynum). Explain the grounds for this relative optimism.
 8. Describe the ways in which the perceived psychology of crowds represented a menace and a return to backwardness and savagery for the students and observers of that psychology.
 9. Give an account of J-M Charcot's work on hysteria.
 10. How might one argue that Lombroso's belief in the literal, visible, physical stigmata of degeneration and degenerate types was so simplistic as to be of little influence in the degenerationist debates outside his native Italy?

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11. On what grounds did workers and authors in the public health movement in Britain in the period c 1880 – 1914 reject hereditarian degenerationism?
12. ‘All accounts of European degenerationism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are at the mercy of the fundamentally elusive nature of the object they seek to locate and pin down’. Debate this, drawing on the historiography you have examined.

END OF PAPER