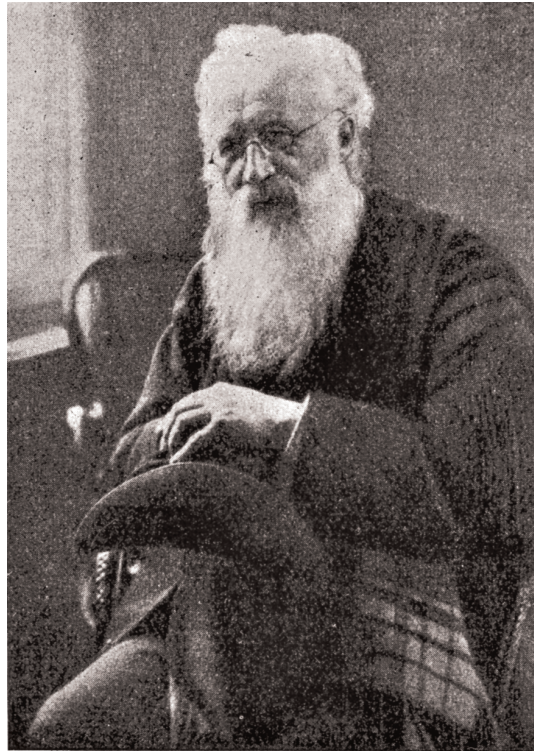


Ewald Hecker, 1843–1909



E. Hecker.

Ewald Hecker was born on Oct. 20, 1843, in Halle, Prussia. His father was a master builder, and thus Hecker studied architecture and medicine from 1861 to 1866. He worked with Karl Ludwig Kahlbaum in Görlitz until 1872 and became one of his closest friends and his chief of staff. In 1891 Hecker purchased his own psychiatric hospital in Wiesbaden, in western Germany. Because of his political liberalism, he was never awarded an academic professorship of psychiatry at a university hospital, but he was honored with a professorial title in 1907. He married in 1871, had two sons and one daughter, and died after a series of strokes in 1909.

Hecker is mostly known as the originator of the concept of hebephrenia (1871) and as the expositor of Kahlbaum's "clinical method" (1). However, he should also be remembered for his revolutionary spirit and his progressive ideas, which strongly diverged from the mainstream of psychiatry of his time. Hecker recognized early in his career that the asylums of that time did not provide adequate care for patients with less severe forms of psychiatric disorders. He also strongly advocated the abolition of coercive measures in psychiatry and publicly questioned their clinical utility and psychiatrists' right to administer them. For Hecker, the importance of establishing a humane environment for the patients became so paramount that he even took some patients into his own household. In his day, Hecker made himself a name as a hypnotherapist and psychotherapist, mainly for patients with cy-

clothymia, anxiety, and sleep disorders (2), and he provided the touchstone for today's integration of psychological treatments into psychiatry.

In addition, Hecker promoted public education. Many of his publications were directed at general practitioners, patients, and their families in an attempt to educate them about psychiatric disorders and to diminish the stigmatization associated with suffering from such a disorder (3). His scientific publications covered such diverse topics as malingering, forensic psychiatry, and physiological and pathological laughter, distinguishing him as a scientific enthusiast and empathic therapist.

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