

the
ABC
Book
of Mental
Illnesses

Written & Designed by **April Tran**

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American Psychiatric Association

The American Psychiatric Association is the largest psychiatric organization in the world. As medical "experts" in the field of psychiatry, the APA publishes manuals and booklets of criteria for mental illnesses and their classifications called the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine the DSM serves the psychiatrist by assessing and diagnosing "clinical disorders, personality disorders/mental retardation, general medical conditions and psychosocial and environmental problems."¹ After compiling the patient's symptoms, psy-

chiatrists are able to sift through a list of diagnosis, labeling their mental illnesses. Psychiatrist Allen Frances expressed on *Psychology Today* that the American Psychiatric Association creates madness through the form of the DSM 5, "The DSM 5 will turn temper tantrums into a mental disorder ... Normal grief will become Major Depressive Disorder ... The everyday forgetting characteristic of old age will now be misdiagnosed as Minor Neurocognitive Disorder."² What was then recognized as "normal" human behaviour is now being misdiagnosed and treated as a mental illness.

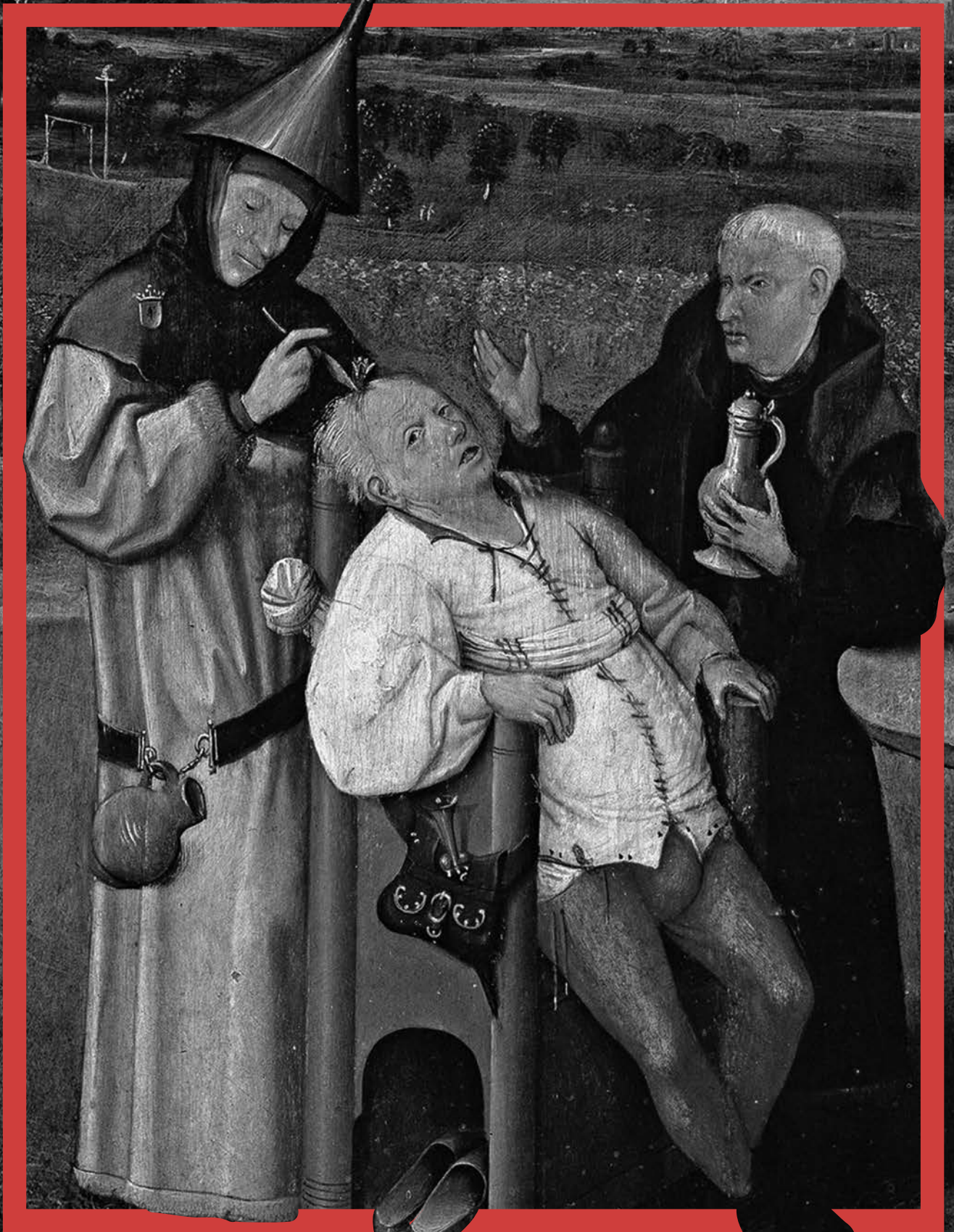


Bb

Biochemsistry

An individual's biochemistry has now been the most recognized reasoning of mental illnesses. Chemical imbalances within the brain are corrected with medication. Biochemistry is a component

of the medical model that is most commonly used to discuss mental illness. Other factors that could include the result of mental illness are genetic predisposition.

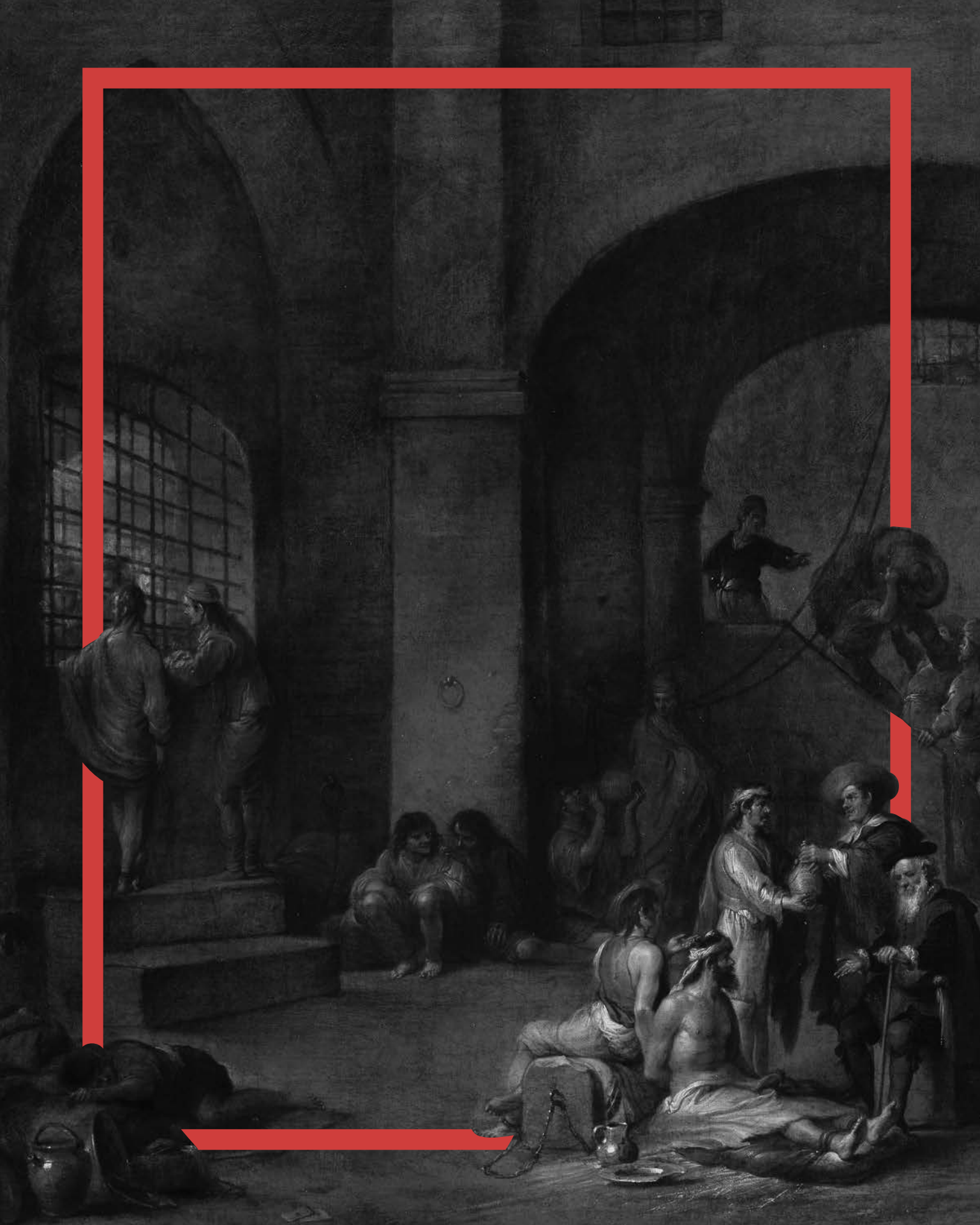




Criminality

Criminality and mental illness have been associated with each other since the introduction of psychiatric institutions. In the 17th century, the criminally insane and the mentally ill were confined together in institutions such as the Salpêtrière. While on trial, defendants have been able to plea for the insanity defense arguing that they cannot be held fully accountable for their crimes due to a mental health

episode or illness. According to Anthony Samuels et al., "In certain instances, psychiatric evidence may facilitate an acquittal or the reduction of a charge of murder to manslaughter. Where a verdict of manslaughter is returned, judges have discretion in sentencing and psychiatric testimony may well be a mitigating factor in sentence length."³



Dd

Dependency & Drug Abuse

Alcohol consumption has been a social activity since the dawn of time and has been used as a form of escapism and personal oppression. The dependency of alcohol has been labeled dipsomania and was introduced by Brühl-Cramer. Brühl-Cramer argued, "Dipsomania is an evil influencing the population of many states, the morality of men, the domestic contentment of many families in a most

detrimental way."⁴ Alcohol and drug dependency has been used to treat many emotions, "Violent annoyance, but mainly depressing feelings such as grief and sorrow produce an involuntary, more or less instinctive desire for the consumption which is drunk as a calming and amusing remedy, as a refreshing drink, and so this illness develops."⁵



De

Ethnicity

The stigma of having a racial and ethnic identity — separate from the dominant culture — has resulted in a racist and ethnocentric construct of mental illness. Race and ethnicity have affected the outcome of mental diagnosis for many years. In an interview with *Psychology Today*, professor and psychiatrist Jonathan Metzl stated, "National Institute of Mental Health studies found that 'blacks have a 65% higher rate of schizophrenia than whites' ... African-American patients were 'significantly more likely' than white patients to receive diagnoses of

schizophrenia, and 'significantly less likely' than white patients to receive diagnoses for other mental illnesses such as depression or bipolar disorder."⁶ Drapetomania was a condition popularized in the 19th century, classifying runaway slaves. Witnessed through the treatment of Canada's Indigenous peoples and immigrants from China, Canada has had a history of stripping alternative cultures in favour of the dominant culture. The language barrier between English and alternative languages was classified as some form of mental illness.



Ff

Folly

During the Middle Ages, folly (or foolish) behaviour was considered to be a sign of mental illness. Because mental illness was viewed from a religious perspective, foolish behaviour was considered to be immoral and sinful, categorizing the individuals as mad. According to Eric Midelfort and the old testament, "Just as there were those who saw sinful madness as the primeval flaw

in God's creation, and just as others might emphasize the devil as the ruler of this world, driving its human denizens to suicide or possessing their bodies in blasphemous frenzies, so there were many ... who attributed the basic defects of our world to folly, which they perceived as a mental disorder."⁷ In short, folly behaviour was believed to be the result of demonic possession.



Gg

Gender

As a predominantly male-driven field of study and occupation in early history, "Men are from Mars, women are from Venus" goes without saying. Before Intersectionality was taken into consideration, gender was another classification of differentiating possible diagnoses. Similar to racism, sexism called for a woman's erratic behaviour to be blamed

on her reproductive system and sexuality rather than resulting in a male-biased diagnoses such as depression or bipolar disorder. Women were identified with gender-biased diagnoses such as hysteria with symptoms that included mood disorders, a wandering uterus, or sexual desire such as nymphomania.





Humors

The four humors were introduced through Greek medicine and organized around the four elements. These humors were the centre of medicine until the 16th century. "In essence the theory attributed sickness to an imbalance or corruption of the four basic humors, blood,

phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile."

⁸ An imbalance of humors resulted in the individual being melancholic, phlegmatic, choleric and sanguine. The humors interactions could be influenced by certain periods of time, temperature, age, gender, and temperament.





Impulses

Impulse control disorders are classified as psychiatric disorders that compel the affected individual to execute impulsive actions that they cannot resist. The stages of impulsivity include: an "impulse arising", "tension increases", "action on the impulse brings pleasure", "a sense of relief", followed by "guilt or remorse replacing pleasure and relief".⁹ Impulse control disorders include gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, hoarding, compulsive

buying, a variety of addictions, and habits that include trichotillomania, nail biting, and skin picking. "Biochemical pharmacology proposes that there is a relationship between impulsivity, addiction and the brain's production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that controls feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. Low levels of dopamine may increase the risk of impulsive high-risk behaviour."¹⁰



Jj

Junk Food

Almost everyone can identify with how sacred candy and all things sugary were when they were young. Every parent has given the excuse that too much sugar will make you hyper or even mad if you ingest large quantities. The act of binge consuming junk food had become an example of madness after the Moscone-Milk assas-

sination. Psychiatrists Martin Blinder and George Solomon argued "White's frequent episodes of depressions were escalated by an exclusive diet of junk—Twinkies, cupcakes and Cokes.' According to Blinder, the more junk food White consumed, the worse he seemed to feel psychologically."¹¹



Kk

Kleptomania

Kleptomania is an impulse control disorder that creates a strong, sudden urge in the affected individual to steal items that they can afford. Kleptomania has been prescribed to affluent members of society who are caught shoplifting and are identified with having a mental disorder, whereas their less "superior" counterparts in wealth and race are considered criminals. "Esquirol reported that

the individual with this disorder frequently tries to avoid the stealing behaviour, which Esquirol postulated was by its nature irresistible. He wrote: 'Voluntary control is deeply compromised: the patient is constrained to practice acts which are dictated neither by his reasoning, nor by his emotions, acts that his conscience condemns, but over which he has no conscious control.'¹²





Lunar Effects

Astrologists and philosophers have merged together in belief of lunar effects on human mentality. The moon's gravitational pull produces tides and lengthens days, but many (including Aristotle) believed that the moon created mental disturbances. According to David Campbell and John Beets, "The non-empirical literature has related lunar phases to many aspects of mental aberration including pyromania, suicide,

alcoholism, somnambulism, and lycanthropy. Children and persons of poor mental stability have been thought to be particularly susceptible."¹³ Institution admittance was at a highest during the full moon. In addition to the aforementioned, "Aristotle wrote that menstruation begins when the moon is waning. Sexual powers are believed to increase until the moon is full ... The moon is held to influence both birth and death."¹⁴



Mm

Mythology

The Ancient Greeks established the basis of medicine until the disbelief of the four humors in the 17th century. Ancient Greece was based on the union of church and state so it was not unorthodox for Greek mythology to have an impactful role on medicine. Mental illness had connections to Greek mythology with vengeful and angered Gods wreaking havoc on individual's minds. ADHD correlates to the Greek myth of Prometheus defying Zeus. Mitch-

ell Gibson explains, "The negative attributes of Uranus are exactly the same as the major characteristics of the illness of ADHD—rebelliousness, unpredictability, and defiance."¹⁵ Zeus, the God of Greek mythology and religion has a historical background of punishing those who do no right by him, "the Greek hero Heracles is driven mad by Zeus' jealous wife Hera, and Agamemnon was deprived of his wits by Zeus himself in the *Iliad*."¹⁶



Nn

Noise

Noise sensitivity has become more apparent in relation to post-traumatic stress syndrome. After experiencing a traumatic event, the individual may continue to be affected by reminders of

their trauma, initiating their stress. For post-traumatic stress resulting from contributions to war, loud noises often act as a trigger and reminder of their distress.





Oppression

Allan Horwitz and Erving Goffman emphasized the relationship found between social oppression and the creation of mental illness. Society consists of a dominant ideology and a collection of sub-cultures within. Social deviance or displaying actions out of the norm have been deemed acts of madness within history. Thomas Scheff argued "once an individual's behaviour is labeled as rule-breaking, due to a range of pressures they are likely to enter into the career of a mentally ill person, especially if they are marginal and powerless and so less able to resist the labeling process."¹⁷ For example, homosexuality was recognized as a psychological disability with its roots structured

in religion, culture, and the law. Homosexuality was no longer a sexual orientation but a disability that was sought to be curable. In *Asylum*, Goffman explained the medical institution "as an authoritarian system that forces patients to define themselves as mentally ill, change their thinking and behaviour, suffer humiliations, accept restrictions, and adjust to institutional life."¹⁸ If an individual was institutionalized for an illness related to social oppression, individuals could possibly be released through conformity. "One primary mode of adaptation of inmates in total institutions is "conversion," the adoption of the official or staff view of oneself and the acting out of the role of the perfect inmate."¹⁹



Pp

Popular Culture

Popular culture has been noted as a possible cause of mental illness. There are a handful of celebrities who have had public meltdowns but what has contributed to what seems to be their mental decline? Celebrities including Britney Spears, Amanda Bynes, and Lindsey Lohan, have displayed irregular behaviour such as

shaving their entire head, tweeting inappropriate comments about rappers and punching back up dancers in the face. Perhaps pop culture and the media is a harvesting zone for mental illnesses. Many celebrities have shared disabilities such as eating disorders, depression, substance abuse and dependency, and anxiety.



Rr

Religion

Religion has played a critical role in the development of history where civilizations have been lead by church and state. Until early modern medicine was introduced, religion paved the constitution of mental illness. Ill, folly or unorthodox behaviour was considered to be demonic possession where the individual had no control of their actions. This madness caused by demonic possession is called demonomania. Midelfort explained, "the overwhelming influence of a religious outlook that assumed that the devil was every-

where, and that madness might have a purely spiritual explanation and a religious solution."²⁰ Religion's authority over mental illness was upheld until the 18th century. Herman Westerink commented, "Philippe Pinel was the founding father of modern psychiatry when, shortly after the French Revolution, he courageously rejected the popular notion that madness was caused by demonic possession and witchcraft, and instead introduced an enlightened humanitarian approach to mental illness."²¹



Ss

Sexuality

Sexuality has played a significant role in the diagnosis of women's madness throughout history. According to German Berrios' research, nymphomania is "the violent desire shown by certain women for the pleasures of love-making."²² However, Plato introduced the counterpart of hypersexuality, the lack of sexual desire. "Plato, in *Timaeus*, argues that the uterus is sad and unfortunate when it does not join with the male and does not give rise to a new birth, and Aristotle and Hippocrates were of the same opinion."

²³Women's gender oppression was

the result of these illnesses. Until the 60s and 70s with the introduction of second wave feminism, a woman's purpose was to bore children, care for her husband, and take care of household duties. A woman with a strong sexual desire constituted as a mad woman because the purpose of sex was no longer limited to procreation, but pleasure as well. However a woman's lack of sexual desire constituted as madness because the woman no longer served her purpose as a child bearer.



Tt

Trauma

Where there has been life, there has been trauma. Every human being has or will face some sort of emotional and psychological trauma during one point of their life. Frightening memories, paranoia, disconnection and a lack of trust are all symptoms of an emotional or psychological traumatic event that leaves the individual stressed, insecure, and vulnerable. Trauma can range from emotional abuse, physical abuse, life-threatening events, injuries, and the loss of relation-

ships. A result of post-traumatic stress is "common among persons with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia ... Post-traumatic stress syndrome influences psychiatric disorders both directly, through the effects of specific PTSD symptoms including avoidance, over-arousal, and re-experiencing the trauma, and indirectly, through the effects of common correlates of PTSD such as retraumatization, substance abuse, and difficulties with interpersonal relationships."²⁴

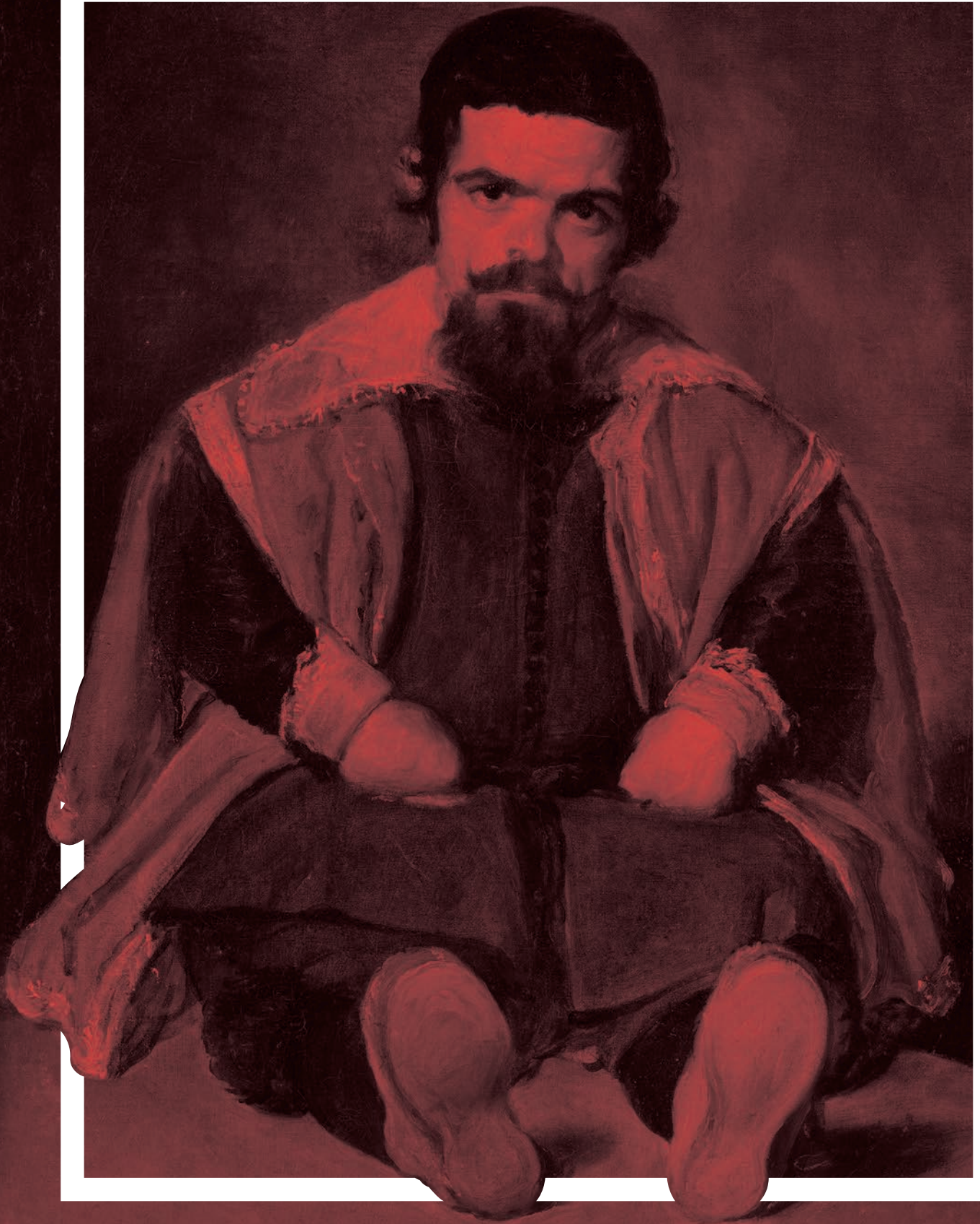


Un

Unusuality

In the 16th century, individuals who had physical deformities, disabilities or did not typically identify with the dominant society were considered mentally ill. During the 16th century, outsiders were more brutally scrutinized and excommunicated than what we are familiar with today. Erik Midel-

fort explains, "It appears that cripples, dwarfs, and other misshapen persons were similarly regarded as outside the normal categories of social status, and in fact fools were sometimes portrayed as cripples, perhaps to exemplify their mentally crippled condition."²⁵





Vagabonds

Similar to the outcasts of society including criminals and the disabled, vagabonds (or the poor) were lumped into the group of mad men for a substantial amount of time. Based on Foucault's reasoning, "Madness, in particular, was the common thread connecting all these social outcasts. It was the underlying irrational force linking death, crime and idleness. Madness figured as a special case of unreason, the hidden

disorder of unintelligible criminals, retarded children, dangerous vagabonds — the residues of society."²⁶ Foucault introduced the "Great Confinement" as he analyzed the introduction of the institution to separate society and its outcasts for protection. Inmates, the criminally insane, mad individuals, prostitutes, and vagrants were housed together under an authoritarian institution.





Wandering Wombs

A wandering womb or displaced uterus was believed to be the diagnosis of many women in ancient Greece and European early modern medicine. Wandering wombs were popularized by Hippocrates and are often associated with hysteria and nymphomania. The symptoms of a wandering womb is as documented in *The Practice of Physick*, "In the beginning ... they are more sad and silent than ordinary, but with a wanton rowing of their eyes and a ruddiness of countenance; which

ruddiness is sometime more than at others: especially when mention is made of matters belonging to bodily lust, for then their breathing is changed ... Afterwards when the disease is exasperated, they begin to scold, and to weep, and ever and anon they fall a laughing."²⁷ Cures for a wandering womb, hysteria, and nymphomania included the drawing of blood "as far as the patients strength can bear", purgation, bathing, injections into the womb, cooling ointments, and an orgasm.²⁸



Xx

X-Chromosomes

The X chromosome is one of two sex-determining chromosomes (the other contributor being the Y chromosome). The X chromosome has been linked to intellectual disabilities (mental retardation) including Fragile X syndrome and ATR-X syndrome. Individuals with mental disabilities were often categorized with the mentally ill. "Other than physical

disabilities, doctors did not differentiate between different kinds of intellectual or mental health conditions. Psychiatric, learning and developmental disabilities were often all lumped together."²⁹ The mentally ill and disabled were placed in institutions and throughout history have been reintegrated back into society through assistance programs.



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