

History of Psychiatry

History of Psychiatry – Key Milestones & Themes

1. Ancient Foundations (c. 3000?BCE – 5th?century?CE)

Era / Region	Contributions	Notable Figures / Texts
Mesopotamia & Egypt	Early concepts of “madness” as spiritual or demonic possession; use of rituals, herbs, and isolation.	<i>Edwin Smith Papyrus</i> (c.?1600?BCE) – describes head injuries and mental symptoms.
Ancient India	Ayurvedic medicine links mental health to imbalance of <i>doshas</i> ; emphasis on diet, lifestyle, and meditation.	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> (??1st?century?CE).
Classical Greece	First rational explanations; distinction between physical and psychological causes.	Hippocrates – “ <i>On the Sacred Disease</i> ” (epilepsy) and <i>humoral theory</i> (excess of black bile ? melancholy).
Roman Medicine	Expanded Hippocratic ideas; introduced public asylums for the poor.	Galen – integrated philosophy with medicine; stressed environmental factors.
Early Christianity	Mental illness often seen as moral failing or demonic possession; care provided by monastic infirmaries.	St.?Basil the Great (4th?c.) – established “beds for the insane.”

2. Medieval & Renaissance Period (5th – 17th?centuries)

Development	Details
Islamic Golden Age	Physicians like Al?Razi and Avicenna described “melancholia” and “mania,” advocating humane treatment and diet.
European Asylums	“Bedlam” (Bethlem Hospital, London, 1247) becomes the prototype of large, custodial institutions; conditions often brutal.
Renaissance Humanism	Renewed interest in anatomy and the mind; early speculation about the brain’s role in behavior.

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Development	Details
Legal & Moral Shifts	1597 English "Vagrancy Act" criminalized wandering mentally ill; began to separate "dangerous" from "ill" persons.

3. Enlightenment & Moral Treatment (18th century)

Concept	Key Points
Moral Treatment	Emphasized kindness, structured routine, work, and social interaction over chains and confinement.
Pioneers	Philippe Pinel (France) – removed chains at Bicêtre (1793). William Tuke (England) – founded the York Retreat (1796).
Impact	Shift from punishment to therapeutic environment; laid groundwork for modern psychiatric hospitals.

4. 19th Century Institutionalization & Classification

Aspect	Highlights
Growth of Asylums	Massive expansion across Europe & North America; often overcrowded, but also sites of systematic observation.
Nosology	Emil Kraepelin (Germany) – introduced dichotomy <i>Dementia Praecox</i> (later schizophrenia) vs. <i>Manic-Depressive Illness</i> (bipolar). Published <i>Psychiatrische Erkrankungen</i> (1896).
Biological Theories	Focus on neuropathology, heredity, and degeneration (e.g., Bénédict Morel's degeneration theory).
Therapeutic Innovations	Early use of hydrotherapy, occupational therapy, and moral management.
