History of Madness

Dr Jatinder Bains
Consultant Psychiatrist and Lecturer
Overview of lecture

- Antiquity
- Christianity
- European witchhunt
- Madness of George III
- Asylum movement
- Forensic Psychiatry

- Degeneration theory
- Freud
- Kraepelin
- Heroic psychiatry
- Modern psychological medicine
Greek tradition I

- Madness becomes object of rational enquiry and literary depiction

• Mythology
  - Characters are puppets, people to whom things happen (Homeric external forces), gods and demons
  - Inner life (conscience) not important
Greek tradition II

• Dionysus (Euripides, The Bacchae):
  – My mother’s sisters said - what they should have been the last
  – To say – that I Dionysus, was not Zeus’s son;
  – That Semele, being with child – they said – by some mortal,
  – Obeyed her father’s prompting, and ascribed to Zeus
  – The loss of her virginity; and they loudly claimed
  – That this lie was the sin for which Zeus took her life.
  – Therefore I have driven those same sisters mad, turned them
  – All frantic out of doors; their home is now a mountain;
  – Their wits are gone. I have made them bear the emblem of
  – My mysteries; the whole female population of Thebes,
  – To the last woman, I have sent raving from their homes.
  – Now, side by side with Cadmus’s daughters, one and all
  – Sit rootless on the rocks under the silver pines
Greek tradition III

• Introspective mentality emerged
• Culminating in works of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
• Life is rational, collapse into unreason is undesirable, knowledge of self could control animal urges and baser appetites (still what we think today)
• Followed by notion that rationality is noble
• Philosophy enabled Greeks to reflect on madness
  – Conflicts; divided loyalties, love/hatred, pity/revenge, duty/desire, family/polis, not just Homeric external forces
  – able to reflect, psychic civil war
• Madness became a problem, raising alternatives and explanations
Greek tradition IV

• Theatre became therapy
  – Characters eaten by guilt, shame
  – suffering could engender wisdom
  – blindness could beget insight (Oedipus)
  – Playing out madness, forcing unthinkable into the open, but then restoring reason
  – Collective catharsis
Greek tradition V; the medical tradition
Hippocrates (5 BC)

- Disease natural and amenable to rational inquiry
- ‘On the Sacred Disease’
- falling sickness (epilepsy) was a regular ailment, caused by normal bodily processes
- ‘sacred disease’ was natural
- therefore all madness within medicine’s bounds
  - 4 ‘humours’ (bodily fluids)
    - yellow bile (choler) (overheats - raving madness- mania)
    - black bile (melancholic) (dejection - depression)
    - blood (sanguine)
    - phlegm (phlegmatic) (epilepsy)
Greek tradition VI; Aretaeus (2 AD)
melancholy/mania (furor)

- ‘Sufferers are dull or stern: dejected or unreasonably torpid, without any manifest cause: such is the commencement of melancholy... some utter cries of an infant and demand to be carried in arms, or they believe themselves a grain of mustard, and tremble continuously for of being eaten by a hen; some refuse to urinate for fear of causing a huge deluge.’
- ‘furor, excitement and euphoria...sometimes kills and slaughters the servants…without being cultivated he says he is a philosopher’
- Melancholia/mania provided a convenient scheme of opposites
- Greek tradition had both psychological and somatic theories for madness
  - internal conflict
  - humoral balance
Overview of lecture

- Antiquity
- Christianity
- European witchhunt
- Madness of George III
- Asylum movement
- Forensic Psychiatry
- Degeneration theory
- Freud
- Kraepelin
- Heroic psychiatry
- Modern psychological medicine
Christianity I

- Ideas of madness in middle ages and Renaissance drew much from antiquity
- Contrasting models of mental conditions developed by Greeks assimilated within Christendom, but Church added another conviction
- World is a fallen place, route of man’s alienation is sexual knowledge, longing
- Idea of original sin (carry sin of original parents)
- Diseases
  - manifestations of sin, punishment
  - evidence of presence of the other kingdom.
    - ‘This world is a battleground’. Disease is a manifestation of satanic forces
  - possibility that they may lead to purification
Christianity II

• Reject secular life, longings of the body, ‘my Kingdom is not of this world’
  – Christian belief is seen as insane
    • If born wealthy, give it away
  – We Christians are insane! Happy to be seen as mad
  – If you behave insanely you will obtain external life and happiness
Overview of lecture

- Antiquity
- Christianity
- European witchhunt
- Madness of George III
- Asylum movement
- Forensic Psychiatry
- Degeneration theory
- Freud
- Kraepelin
- Heroic psychiatry
- Modern psychological medicine
European Witch Hunt

- 1450-1750
  - 100-110,000 found guilty, all involving a choice between Christ and Satan
  - 60,000 executions

- Context
  - Urbanisation
  - Reformation
Lucifer

- Is subtle and very attractive, everywhere, sexual aspects very important, sexuality is a sign of Lucifer
- Promotes crazed licentiousness, females find him difficult to resist (Eves susceptibility to the snake)
- Are marks left of neck, extra nipple, speaking a different language
- Possession – Involuntary, less ominous than voluntarily entering into diabolic pact. Treated with exorcism
Practice of Witchcraft

- Voluntary union with Satan’s arm, kiss his bottom, fly with him, on a broom stick (sexual connotations)
- Naked sexual congress with more than one person at a time, dancing
- After forming pact will be able to perform black magic
- Travel from town to town, causing cattle fall, miscarriage, bovine diseases, bad harvests, epidemics, all assumed to be evil deeds
- Beyond saving as union entered into voluntarily
Nicole Obry (Laon 1566)

- 16 yrs old, married, not clever though witty
- Bitten by dog, started to menstruate
- Initially had a good possession (angelic)
- Told by spirit of grandfather that he was in hell and wished to go to heaven. Asked Nicole to help by organising pilgrimages and masses
- Nicole organises this but doesn’t go on pilgrimage
- Defiant over her decision and her grandfather’s wishes
- Concluded that she is possessed and must be exorcised
- Put on stage for 2 months, observed by many people and exorcised daily
- Becomes more blasphemous, masturbates openly, urinates on herself, denounces clergy
- Calls cathedral a brothel
- Names other withes
- Exorcism deemed to be a success
- Deemed to free and innocent, 1 further attempt at possession 4-5 yrs later
- Retrospective: hysteria, enjoying attention, a ‘good trip’, ?personality disorder, psychotic illness
What to do with Witches?

• Can’t get information out of witches therefore must torture, judicial torture

• Sprenger and Kraemer
  – Dominican monks
  – Malleus Maleficrum
    • guide to dealing with witches
    • how to spot a witch
    • her powers
    • how to examine and sentence a witch
Who were the witches?

• Women
  – Midwifes: high infant mortality, easily accused by aggrieved parents
  – Cooks
  – Healers
  – Practiced magic in society
  – Mostly unmarried
    • Married also accused, conflict with husband/children or property conflicts

• Seen as morally and intellectually inferior, no physical or economic power therefore use sorcery as protection and revenge, and also easily accused
Witchcraft explanations

• Age of anxiety
  – poverty, inflation, growing population, plague, war, famine
  – social identity threatened, threaten enemy within, secure own identity, focus on common enemy
  – Deviance
    • unpleasant neighbours, religious and moral deviance, non-church goers, homosexuals, prostitutes, those having abortions, senility and antisocial behaviour

• Public 16-17C thought that witches were mentally ill
  – Dangers in retrospective diagnosis
  – If natural explanations believed at the time why did so many confess

• Feminist Interpretation
• Europe’s inner demons, unleashes either racial or theological
• A rational event, part of the history of Christianity, battle to death, therefore not an outbreak of madness
Decline of witch hunts

• Out of control
• The Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution
Overview of lecture

• Antiquity
• Christianity
• European witchhunt
• **Madness of George III**
• Asylum movement
• Forensic Psychiatry

• Degeneration theory
• Freud
• Kraepelin
• Heroic psychiatry
• Modern psychological medicine
George III (‘Mad King George’)

- Summer 1788 acting oddly, by Nov losing capacity of reason
  - Eventually admitted King has alienation of mind
- Political and constitutional crisis
- Cured by Reverend Dr Francis Willis
- Great political relief
- Madness important and can be cured/treated by doctors
Overview of lecture

• Antiquity
• Christianity
• European witchhunt
• Madness of George III
• Asylum movement
• Forensic Psychiatry
• Degeneration theory
• Freud
• Kraepelin
• Heroic psychiatry
• Modern psychological medicine
Madhouses

• Bethlem 1377
• Madness of George III
• The asylum and the industrial revolution
  – more tightly defined norms of behaviour
• asylum served a useful role
Madhouses II

• Abuses and greater legislation
• Changing perception of madness
Moral Management

- Scandals
- York Retreat (William and Samuel Tuke)
- Phillipe Pinel
- John Connolly
- Moral management
  - Mentally ill perceived as children rather than animals
Themes in British Psychiatry

- Moral therapy replaced chains
- Physical constraint replaced by moral control
- Little role of doctors
- Approach resulted in cure, optimism
- Concept of partial insanity, could be cured
- Medical profession frustrated about lay success
  - Asserted right as primary diagnosticians
  - By 1840s had specialised journals
  - Tried to convince others that public asylums under medical control was best
  - 1850 Asylum Act
- 1850s Asylums in full swing. Moral therapy since as humane and therapeutically sound
Overview of lecture

- Antiquity
- Christianity
- European witchhunt
- Madness of George III
- Asylum movement
- Forensic Psychiatry
- Degeneration theory
- Freud
- Kraepelin
- Heroic psychiatry
- Modern psychological medicine
The Rise of Criminal Insanity

• Legal view; voluntary acts
• Medical; deterministic
• Rivalry between medicine and law
• Early trials
  – Earl Ferrers 1760
  – James Hadfield 1800
• 1800 Criminal Lunatic Act
• 1830s-40s psychiatry organising as a profession
Rise of criminal insanity
McNaughten’s Rules

• Daniel McNaughten and Robert Peel
• The trial
• The aftermath
• McNaughten’s rules
Degeneration Theory 1870-1914

• ‘the degenerate human being, if he is abandoned to himself, falls into progressive degradation. He becomes...not only incapable of forming part of the chain of transmission of progress in human society, he is the greatest obstacle to this progress through his contact with the healthy portion of the population..the span of his existence is limited as that of all monstrosities’ (Morel)
Phrenology

• Add slide
Freud and psychoanalysis
The talking cure

• If ‘told all’, using free association, unconscious repressions which were the basis of neurosis would find release

• Personal background

• Influences
  – Charcot/Breuer
  – Darwin

• What he did differently

• Sceptics
Emil Kraepelin

- Born 1856
- Influences
  - Morel, Kahlbaum, Hecker, Falret
- Emphasis on course and prognosis, not on biological psychiatry
- Form v. content
- Achievements
  - Dementia praecox (SCZ) v Manic depressive psychosis
  - basis of modern Western psychiatry
Therapeutic Nihilism and Heroic Psychiatry

- Creation of heroic psychiatric treatments to show psychiatry can help and should be treated seriously
  - Focal sepsis
  - 1920s; Malaria used for treating GPI and psychogenic paralysis
Heroic Psychiatry
Insulin coma therapy (1930s-50s)
Heroic Psychiatry
lobotomies (1930s onwards)
Heroic Psychiatry - ECT
Modern Psychological Medicine

• Standardisation (DSM & ICD)
• Availability of new treatments
  – Pharmaceutical revolution
    • Antipsychotics
    • Antidepressants
    • Mood Stabilisers
  – Cognitive behavioural psychotherapy
Care in the community

• ‘Decarceration’ 1960s
  – Pharmaceutical revolution, movement for patients’ rights, crumbling asylums, expenses
  – partly successful
Further reading

• Shorter, Edward (1997). A history of psychiatry: from the age of the asylum to the age of Prozac