

THE HOUSE OF THE MIND

*The Hidden World of Psychiatric
Care Behind Four Walls*

ASST. PROF. DR. YASEMİN ÖZEL

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Asst. Prof. Dr. Yasemin Özel

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FOREWORD

A Guide Through the Labyrinths of the Mind

When I wrote my doctoral thesis on “the power of creative thinking,” my goal was to understand how the human mind could generate surprisingly innovative solutions to even the most complex problems. I remember pausing for a moment during one of a long night working on my dissertation, surrounded by hundreds of articles and books. The concepts were flawless, the theories elegant, the diagnostic criteria laid out with millimeter precision. Everything was so clear on paper... But in my mind, a completely different image was unfolding: the trembling hands of a patient I was visiting, a weary mother watching me helplessly from the corner of the room, and the heavy silence of the question hanging in the air: “What do we do now?”

Over the years I have dedicated to psychiatric nursing, I witnessed a creativity that existed far beyond theory, right at the heart of life itself: the creativity of a father who, in a moment of crisis, created worlds with a spontaneously invented fairy tale to calm his child... The creativity of a woman who devised a new game every day to ensure her husband took his medication... The immense, healing creativity of my patients who painted, composed music, and wrote poetry to cope with the storm within.

I came to understand that mental health was not merely about understanding diagnoses and applying treatment protocols. The real issue was the ability of each individual, each family, to find their own unique way out of their own unique labyrinth. It was the art of forging new paths where standard maps were useless.

This book was born at the intersection of these two worlds – the analytical power of academic knowledge and the transformative power of human creativity. It was written to bring everything I have accumulated over the years out of

the sterile corridors of the clinic and the abstraction of lecture halls, and into the very place where life is lived: your homes. Because the greatest problems sometimes give birth to the most creative solutions.

Therefore, the text you are holding is not a textbook that tells you to “read and move on.”

This is a discovery journal. As you navigate its pages, I invite you to become an active “problem-solver,” not just a passive recipient of information. Underline, take notes in the margins, and come up with your own creative solutions for the scenarios presented. Because understanding the mind is not possible through memorization, but by learning to think like it—to be flexible, original, and creative.

On this journey, I promise you three things:

To Understand: To understand the person behind the label of a diagnosis, the unseen need beneath a behavior, and most importantly, the potential for a solution hidden within every challenge.

To Empathize: To replace judgment and fear with curiosity. To shift from the question, “Why is this person acting this way?” to “If I were in this person’s situation, what creative path would I try?”

To Act: Whether you are a student in this field, a colleague, a family member trying to support a loved one, or simply a reader curious about the human soul... This book will offer you a new perspective, a new method to try, at the very moment you say, “I’m stuck, I don’t know what to do.”

The labyrinths of the mind can be complex and sometimes frightening. But remember, every labyrinth is a puzzle, and every puzzle has a creative solution.

Now, it is time to use the creative power of our minds to open that door together.

Welcome.

CHAPTER 1

From Magic to Science, from Chains to Therapy: The Forgotten Story of Psychiatry

Paris, 1795.

The courtyard of the Salpêtrière Hospital reeked of mud and despair after the rain. As Dr. Philippe Pinel walked towards the iron gate, keys in hand, the skeptical gazes of the guards and other physicians felt like arrows piercing his back. Inside, a woman who had been chained to the wall for over a decade looked into Pinel's eyes. There was no madness in her gaze, nor was there surrender; only a heavy, petrified stillness, weighted by the years. Pinel turned to the guard and gave the historic order: "Unchain this woman."

In that moment, it was not just the iron shackles on a woman's wrists that began to break, but a millennia-old fetter that had been clamped on the mind itself. But to arrive at this moment of enlightenment, humanity had traversed a long and dark path through the labyrinths of the mind. This journey began with the wrath of gods and the whispers of demons...

To better understand the light of the torch that Pinel lit, let us first travel to the deepest point of that darkness, to the place where it all began.

Teleporting...

a. “Black Bile” and “Evil Spirits” (Antiquity - The Middle Ages)

In the first pages of history, the complexities of the human mind were explained by forces beyond the earthly realm. Abnormal behaviors, fits of rage, or profound melancholy were seen as either a punishment from the gods or the work of evil spirits possessing the body. This belief led to one of history’s oldest surgical interventions: Trepanation. These holes, found in numerous prehistoric skulls, were drilled to create an escape route for the “evil spirits” trapped inside the head¹. This was one of the first and most primitive physical interventions to calm the storm in the mind.

This demonological perspective persisted in the first civilizations. For the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Hebrews, mental illnesses were largely the work of demonic entities or spirits. Treatment consisted of prayers, magical rituals, and exorcism ceremonies.

But on the shores of the Aegean, under the shade of olive trees, a brand-new idea was beginning to sprout, challenging this millennia-old supernatural explanation.

“A Scene from History”: Kos Island, 410 BC

As the physician Demetrios sat in the courtyard of his patient Lysander’s home, he listened to the father’s anxious voice. “It has been three months, physician,” said the wealthy merchant. “My son, my brave son... He no longer goes hunting, nor does he drink wine with his friends. He just sits in his room, as if talking to shadows... He wakes up at night crying. The gods are angry with us, are they not? We have made offerings to Apollo, but to no avail. Has an evil spirit entered him, or did an enemy cast a spell on him?”

Demetrios quietly studied Lysander’s pale face for a while. Then he slowly shook his head. The first thing he had learned from Hippocrates, the great master of the

¹ Faria, M. A. (2013). Violence, mental illness, and the brain – A brief history of psychosurgery: Part 1 – From trepanation to lobotomy. *Surgical Neurology International*, 4, 49.

school on Kos, was to set aside superstition.

“Honorable Theon,” he said in a calm voice. “The problem does not lie with the gods or with spells. The problem lies within Lysander’s body. Just as a fever engulfs the body, this sorrow is an imbalance of the body. Four essential fluids circulate within us: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. In your son’s body, the black bile (melas khole), produced in the spleen, has increased. This excess bile clogs the vessels leading to the brain, shrouds his mind in a fog, and darkens his spirit. That is why we call it ‘melancholia’.”

The merchant stared at the physician in astonishment. Could it be that simple?

Demetrios continued: “The best medicine we can give him are herbs to cleanse his bowels, a light diet, plenty of rest, and calm walks every day. Gentle conversations to occupy his mind and perhaps the music of the lyre will also do his spirit good. When the body finds its balance, the mind will be enlightened. Let the gods remain on Olympus; we shall attend to our work.”

The fictional scene above represents a revolutionary turning point in the history of psychiatry.

Hippocrates (c. 460–370 BC) and his followers were the first in history to systematically oppose the idea that mental disorders stemmed from supernatural or divine causes. For Hippocrates, the responsible organ was not the gods in the sky, but the brain inside the skull². Mania, melancholia, and paranoia were not divine punishments, but the results of bodily processes, just like a stomach ache. Therefore, he believed that mental illnesses should be treated like physical ones. According to Hippocrates, the path to diagnosis was not through divine prophecy, but through carefully observing the patient, considering a rational etiology, and balancing theory with these observations.

2 Ivanovic-Zuvic, F. (2004). Epistemological considerations about medicine and mental health in ancient Greece Consideraciones epistemológicas sobre la medicina y las enfermedades mentales en la antigua Grecia

The most well-known product of this philosophy is the “*Humoral Pathology*” or the Theory of the Four Humors, which would influence medical thought for thousands of years. According to this theory, health depended on the balance of these four fluids (eucrasia), while illness was caused by their imbalance (dyscrasia). For example:

Excess of Blood: A cheerful, energetic temperament (sanguine).

Excess of Yellow Bile: An angry, irritable temperament (choleric).

Excess of Phlegm: A calm, slow temperament (phlegmatic).

Excess of Black Bile: A sad, sorrowful temperament (melancholic).

Although this approach is primitive by modern standards, the two fundamental innovations it introduced are priceless:

1. *Observation and Classification:* By carefully observing patients, they made the first definitions of terms we still use today, such as mania, melancholia, paranoia, and hysteria.
2. *Rationalization:* They brought the problem down from the heavens to the earth, into the human body. This was the first and most crucial step in making mental illness a subject of medicine.

This scientific approach also brought with it one of the first classifications of mental disorders. The names of some conditions defined by Hippocrates will still sound familiar to us today: Mania, Melancholia, Phrenitis (Acute Brain Syndrome), Delirium, Disobedience, Paranoia, Panic, Epilepsy, and Hysteria³. The chaos of the mind was now transforming into a phenomenon that could be named and contemplated.

However, with the fall of the Roman Empire, the light of science in Europe dimmed, and dark forces re-emerged on the stage. The rational legacy of Hippocrates gave way to the

3 Meletis, J., & Konstantopoulos, K. (2010). The beliefs, myths, and reality surrounding the word hema (blood) from homer to the present. *Anemia*, 2010(1), 857657.

dogmatic and demonic explanations of the Middle Ages. In this era, when the Church's power was at its zenith, the traveler in the labyrinth of the mind was not seen as a "patient" but as a "sinner" possessed by the devil. Books like the *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches) provided a theological basis for the branding and burning of thousands of people, especially women, who showed symptoms of mental disorders. Demetrios's calm and scientific approach was about to be replaced by centuries of chains, fires, and Inquisition courts.

b. "The Great Confinement" and the Asylums (17th - 18th Centuries)

"A Scene from History": A Sunday Afternoon at Bedlam

When Thomas was shoved through the iron-barred gate, the first thing that hit him was a wall of human sound. It was unlike any sound he had ever known. A peal of laughter would suddenly turn into a scream; a divine murmur from one corner would dissolve into the profanity of another. But the worst was the smell: a compound of unwashed bodies, mold, stale food, and the sharp, pervasive stench of urine that had soaked into everything.

The two guards who brought him dragged him down a long, dim corridor. Hands reached out from the cells in the walls, trying to grasp at the void. Some inmates talked to themselves, some drew nonsensical shapes on the walls, and others stared at Thomas with vacant eyes through the bars. And what was his crime? To be shrouded in a deep mourning for weeks after his wife's death? To neglect his business and stare at the River Thames for hours? His fate was sealed when his brother said, "He has lost his mind, we cannot care for him."

At the end of the corridor, they entered a larger hall. And Thomas froze in horror. The hall was filled not so much with 'patients' like himself, but with well-dressed, bewigged gentlemen and ladies in elegant gowns. They