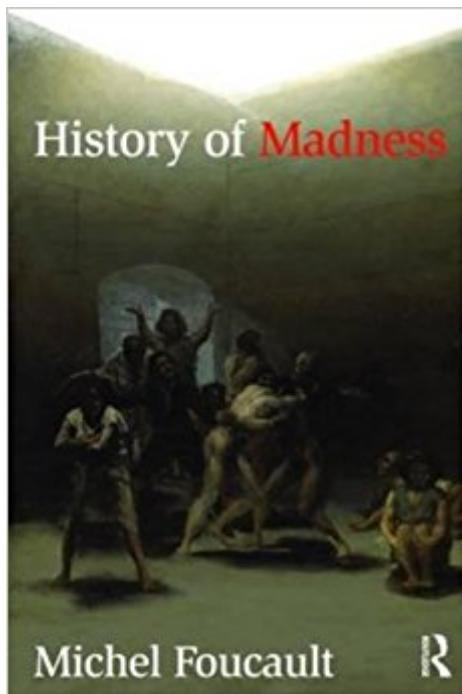


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# History Of Madness



## Synopsis

When it was first published in France in 1961 as *Folie et DÃ©raison: Histoire de la Folie Ã  l'Ã©cge Classique*, few had heard of a thirty-four year old philosopher by the name of Michel Foucault. By the time an abridged English edition was published in 1967 as *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault had shaken the intellectual world. This translation is the first English edition of the complete French texts of the first and second edition, including all prefaces and appendices, some of them unavailable in the existing French edition. History of Madness begins in the Middle Ages with vivid descriptions of the exclusion and confinement of lepers. Why, Foucault asks, when the leper houses were emptied at the end of the Middle Ages, were they turned into places of confinement for the mad? Why, within the space of several months in 1656, was one out of every hundred people in Paris confined? Shifting brilliantly from Descartes and early Enlightenment thought to the founding of the HÃ?pital GÃ©nÃ©ral in Paris and the work of early psychiatrists Philippe Pinel and Samuel Tuke, Foucault focuses throughout, not only on scientific and medical analyses of madness, but also on the philosophical and cultural values attached to the mad. He also urges us to recognize the creative and liberating forces that madness represents, brilliantly drawing on examples from Goya, Nietzsche, Van Gogh and Artaud. The History of Madness is an inspiring and classic work that challenges us to understand madness, reason and power and the forces that shape them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'Scarcely any philosopher working on the history of philosophy, or historian working on the history of institutions, social science or sexuality can avoid confronting the challenge of Foucault's books.'

-Â Michael Ignatieff, Times Literary Supplement 'Without a shadow of a doubt, the most original, influential and controversial text in this field during the last forty years. It remains as challenging now as on first publication. Its insights have still not been fully appreciated and absorbed.'Â " Roy Porter 'Extraordinaryâ |rich and insistent, and almost unreasonable in its necessary repetitions.'Â " Maurice Blanchot Â Â

Michel Foucault (1926-84). Celebrated French thinker and activist who challenged people's assumptions about care of the mentally ill, gay rights, prisons, the police and welfare. Jean Khalfa is a lecturer in French at Cambridge University, UK. Jonathan Murphy is an experienced translator, editor and lecturer.

I still fail to understand what Derrida found unacceptable about this work, now available to us in English, restored to its full length and original title. Let's remember, this is not directly a work of philosophy. In terms of importance, one should compare it to Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire...in short, a history book. But ye, more than that...a history of attitudes and unique human evasions, establishing patterns of taboo. Read along side George Bataille's "Death and Sensuality" one begins to respect "un-reason" and the strange reactions of society when confronted with taboo phenomena. One should use this book as a means to seeing how our current modes of viewing the world are not privileged. As Dr. Jack Kevorkian points out in his book "Glimmeriqs", our established conventions for determining the moral rectitude of an act are not only relative, but more importantly, almost totally unexamined, prejudiced and irrational based on whatever seems the norm of our current cultural zeitgeist, which at present is half-positivist science and half-christian hodge-podge. Nihilism remains unspoken.(Glimmeriqs is a terrible, if not un-readable book, but its author was at least a man of interest, and I think him a nice example of our own present day taboos. Take a moment to watch the documentary on him. It's quite enjoyable.)

This is a marvellous book, packed with historical information about the treatment of the insane and attitudes towards mental illness. I am so glad I have read it, although it is rambling. The language is brilliant and beautiful; the style sometimes arcane.

Foucault's study of the history of how society has viewed madness over time is an important and

thought provoking work. Anyone with an interest in mental health would find this work of value, How we as a society view madness impacts on how we treat our fellow humans.

good

Foucault is essential reading to understand today's systemic breakdown. the history of prisons is a must read also.

Excellent condition!

Finally, the first great work by the 20th century's most influential and prescient thinker is available in full in a beautiful translation. Routledge is one of my favorite publishers and both the paperback and hardback editions meet their usual high standards. As is usual with Foucault, there is so much to think about in every sentence the work is best taken in small doses. It's also very depressing, but amply repays the effort and stamina required to read.

When Foucault sticks to the facts and his archival research (which is exemplary) he is very readable. When he theorises, he (or perhaps his translator) verges on the incomprehensible. He also should have learned and applied the maxim that 'less is more'.

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