Introduction

This is a book about ideas, theories and observations regarding mental life in a specific time, the classical period (fifth and fourth centuries BCE) in Greece. I focus my attention on the medical sources (especially but not exclusively the so-called Hippocratic texts), placing them in dialogue with the testimony offered by literary texts from the same period, whether poetry or prose. My approach is thus interdisciplinary, as far as the more strictly delimited boundaries of ancient science are concerned. It is also anthropological, in the sense that I look at ideas about mental life as cultural–historical information that enriches our knowledge of ancient Greek life and thought as human phenomena; philological, in that it looks closely at the ancient texts, their wording, images and generic conventions; and theoretically engaged, insofar as it assesses ancient doctrines against the set of questions and problems that have become fundamental in the history of Western psychology, in order to highlight their impact on the origins of this history and the perspective they continue to contribute as a part of it.

The *Status Quaestionis*

Although my territory is mostly ancient medicine, several disciplines and areas of research are relevant to this project, and it will therefore be useful to briefly address them here. In this field more than others, the scholarly background and the reception of ancient ideas it embodies are themselves a central part of the story being told.

It is usually the case that any interpretation of ancient answers to key human problems necessarily reflects the precise cultural, intellectual and scientific standpoint from which we look at the past. In the case of mental life, the interpretation becomes itself a segment of this history: if a completely neutral reading remains a utopian goal, its impossibility in the field of historical psychology is declared and self-evident. An eighteenth-century

medical dissertation, any of Freud's psychoanalytical readings of the past, various forms of literary critique and anthropological analysis: all of these produce different versions of antiquity, different 'ancient psychologies', within which terms of discourse this research too was forced to take its initial steps.

I therefore begin by surveying the scholarly research produced on the topic of the mind and mental health in ancient culture in the last two hundred, and especially the last fifty, years. This can only be a brief sketch of the subject, its ramifications and contacts with other areas of research, paying more attention to items relevant to the present inquiry.[1]

Earlier Approaches

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, various scholars devoted historical attention to the topic of 'madness', focusing specifically on medical pathology. These studies are generally characterised by considerable anachronism in the pathological categories they adopt and by a comprehensive approach, with all types of ancient texts considered as cumulative and largely undifferentiated evidence to be used to reconstruct ancient insanity. Literary genres of all kinds, evidence about religious practices, material culture and legal life converge in a single picture. This style of scholarship has obvious limitations, but some of these works contain valuable information never scrutinised again so carefully, and are praiseworthy in their interdisciplinary breadth. R. Nasse's dissertation on medicine, *De Insania Commentatio Secundum Libros Hippocraticos* (1829), is the only exception to this early trend, as he restricts his discussion to medical texts. The systematising effort in this work and its thoroughness are admirable at the same time that its limitations are obvious, as Nasse approaches the 'Hippocratici' as a composite body of theories, but fundamentally as a corpus to be read in search of consistent representations. In its explicitness, however, Nasse's book is an instructive display of early modern medical prejudices on psychiatric matters. A rigid taxonomic frame is forced onto the ancient material (*genera varia delirii*, 28; *genera varia insaniae*, 36; 43–4); description, prognosis, aetiology and cure are explored for each pathology; and so forth. J. H. Thomeé's *Historia Insanorum apud Graecos* (1830), also a *dissertatio medica*, casts the net wider to include mythological, literary and philosophical sources across a wide chronological span. In the same year,

[1] Other bibliographical surveys: Mattes (1970) 7–14; Stok (1996) 2284–8; Porter (2002) 219–33, on madness throughout Western history.

1830, J. B. Friedreich, also a medical student, published his *Versuch einer Literärgeschichte der Pathologie und Therapie der Psychischen Krankheiten*, a monumental project stretching from biblical times to contemporary psychiatry. It is interesting that these earlier works are all authored by medical students, a fact that determines a peculiar (for us) use and analytical style in the approach to ancient sources of all kinds (poetic and mythographical) combined with medical theories, the latter posited as scientific truths, with both types of evidence integrated into a comprehensive discourse.[2] The reason for recalling these contributions to interdisciplinarity and anthropological breadth here (regardless of the shortcomings, naiveté and datedness that make these books of little practical use today) is that this approach still offers a model for scholars interested in historical psychiatry and ancient medicine, areas in which attention to the broader cultural milieu are of key importance, for fundamental contributions in the past two decades have tended to look at the medical evidence in isolation (for instance, Singer 1992, Gundert 2000). R. Semelaigne also wrote his *Études historiques sur l'aliénation mentale dans L'antiquité* (1869) as a medical doctor. Semelaigne divides the discussion chronologically into 'Hippocratic', 'Alexandrian' and 'Greco-Roman' periods, with the first subdivided into specific diseases (*phrenitis, mania, melancholia*, epilepsy and the respective treatments), while the second addresses what can be divined about Erasistratus' and Herophilus' doctrines regarding madness, and the third analyses medical figures from Asclepiades to Galen. At the same time, Semelaigne uses non-medical evidence to substantiate his analysis, and offers a chapter (Chapter 6) in which he analyses what is known of legal practices. In a similar spirit (but with much less success and inferior organisation) is F. Falk's *Studien über Irrenheilkunde der Alten* (1866, and also published by the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*), a combination of medical and literary sources covering a wide span of time. J. Tamburnino's 1909 *De Antiquorum Daemonismo*, a far more literary minded and textual study of possession in the ancient world, which collects much useful material, belongs by contrast to the field of the history of religion.

[2] The approach to ancient sources as psychiatric case studies survives in the form of a curiosity and constitutes a genre of its own, somehow untouched by consideration of anthropological variables. To offer a few examples, 'Functional neuroanatomy in the pre–Hippocratic era: observations from the *Iliad* of Homer' (Sahlas 2001, based on the English translation of the epic text); 'Searching for schizophrenia in ancient Greek and Roman literature' (Evans et al. 2003, applying DSM–IV criteria to identify material related to schizophrenia in ancient texts); on PTSD in Homer, Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994); on this topic, see the discussions in Crowley (2012, 2014) and the studies in Meineck and Konstan (2014).

In the first half of the twentieth century, new trends in humanistic quarters and a wave of interest in mental life led to publication of various titles on ancient insanity. Most of these remain miscellaneous in character; historical periods and provenience, genres and the nature of literary sources, myths and medical evidence are juxtaposed, although a separation of medical and literary sources does begin to emerge. A. C. Vaughan, a professor of Greek, in her *Madness in Greek Thought and Costume* (1919) programmatically avoids the medical evidence in order to concentrate instead on 'popular beliefs', religious and social facts, and legal aspects (covering a time span stretching from archaic Greece to late antiquity, conceived as synchronic space and often confusingly conflated).[3] A. O'Brien Moore, another classicist, in her (longer and far richer) *Madness in Ancient Literature* (1922), also devotes a chapter to 'the reverberations of the medical conceptions in literature', although focusing otherwise solely on 'high literature' from Homer to Nonnus and Seneca. On the medical side, A. Souques, a neurologist at the psychiatric hospital of the Salpêtrière and renowned scientist, wrote his *Étapes de la neurologie dans l'antiquité grecque (d'Homère à Galien)* (1936) as a chronological history divided into 'phases', each dominated by a medical authority ('Hippocratic phase', 'Herophilean–Erasistratean phase' and so forth), with only marginal reference to non-literary authors. The most useful work from this period is the essay by the philologist J. B. Heiberg, 'Geisteskrankheiten im klassischen Altertum' (1927). Heiberg addresses historical, demographic and methodological questions, along with the general cultural and social context of poetic and other literary sources in addition to the medical material, with a rare (for that time) attention to Galen as well. This work (the chronological range of which, despite its title, extends into the late antique period) is especially valuable for its attention to philosophical development and the sense of irregular tradition and transmission it conveys, an important aspect absent from previous narratives, all of which suffer in various ways from a continuity fallacy.

In the second part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, this area of research, like all branches of ancient studies, has grown more diverse and specialised, with anthropology, cultural studies, historical psychology, philology, philosophy, history of religion and history of medicine each developing its own approach. Only in relatively recent times has an interdisciplinary trend prompted discussion at the edges of these various perspectives. In 1955, Drabkin published an important article

[3] On legal matters, see also Diliberto (1984); Clark (1993) 25, 155–72 for various legal and political aspects.

in which he summed up the state of affairs regarding the history of mental health, offering guidelines for future projects that are still for the most part useful today and partially unfulfilled.[4] Drabkin begins by highlighting the problem of the mind–body relationship in ancient Greek thought as a preliminary question that helps identify a number of significant topics: the location of the psychic faculty in ancient medicine; the inseparability of mind and body; the physiological nature of mental disease in ancient medicine; the problem of classification; the developments in ancient psychiatric ideas from Hippocratic times to Galen; the problem of retrospective diagnosis; the usefulness of an anthropological approach; the concepts of predisposition and of 'psychic factors' (what we would call 'triggers'); age and sex, and constitutional factors or types; the role of physiognomics; treatment and the measures taken to protect the insane or guard against them; and legal aspects. Many of these had already been acknowledged in previous work on the topic. But Drabkin firmly points out, for the first time in a general discussion of mental disorder in the ancient world, the need to historicise mental phenomena and the texts that inform us about them.

Relevant research worthy of consideration in the second half of the twentieth century mostly moves along the lines Drabkin suggested, even if a general account of ancient psychopathology (which he hoped for) remains a desideratum and research has instead tended to focus on restricted periods and individual authors or themes.

More recent work can be divided (via a schematisation that is essentially a matter of convenience) as follows.

Comprehensive Cultural Studies of Mentalité Addressing Madness

An interest in irrationality and a revision of neoclassical ideals regarding the ancient world were distinctive traits of twentieth-century perceptions of the classics, expressed most suggestively and famously by Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, written in 1872, whose message ignited a debate on the nature of classical antiquity during the first half of the twentieth century that continues today.[5] This aspect of the reception of antiquity, if differently motivated, is consonant with a fundamental anthropological question that has contributed to shaping our area of study: whether a culture describes insanity purely as a 'disorder', a negative state, as contemporary

[4] Drabkin (1955).
[5] See Henrichs (1984), Nussbaum (1990).

Western culture tends to do (although with multiple distinctions within this definition), or whether it also attaches constructive social practices or positive statuses,[6] such as religious cults or other privileged activities and forms, to insanity. Enormously influential in placing 'the irrational' within Greek culture was *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), in which Dodds discussed the topic of madness both as social datum and as personal experience. Since Dodds's work, religious studies and anthropology have discussed altered ancient states of mind as expressions of religiosity, and biomedical experiences of trance or altered consciousness as cultural phenomena. The cultural aspect gained attention in Western society from the 1960s onwards, in parallel to studies of shamanism and esoteric topics (sometimes fading into autobiography: famously and controversially C. Castaneda's recordings of his supposed experiences with the Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan: 1968, 1971, 1972). With reference to the ancient world, relevant themes here are divine frenzy, possession and its poetic and prophetic powers (found most famously in Plato, but also partly traditional), and reports of collective and individual experiences of possession or telestic–initiatory alteration. This part of the story will not be addressed in the present study, although the reader is directed (after Tamburnino's 1909 dissertation) to the classic Delatte (1934); W. D. Smith (1965), with an important challenge to received ideas on ancient possession; Guidorizzi (2010), with an informative miscellaneous narrative about ancient experiences of possession; and Ustinova's extensive work (2009, 2011).

The publications of Foucault's opus (with a first issue in 1964, under the title *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, followed by a second edition in 1972), translated into English as *History of Madness*, marked a shift in the history of the discipline, or rather initiated a discussion with which everyone in the field felt obliged to measure his or her own work, at least until very recent times. The claim that madness is socially constructed, contigent on historically shifting models of 'reason', and instrumental to relationships of power and issues of social marginalisation and exclusion, is central to Foucault's reading and posits a shift at the beginning of what he calls the 'classical age' of European history, the sixteenth century. On Foucault's interpretation, before this point the history of madness stands in dialogue with that of reason and is free to speak its

[6] On which see Guidorizzi (2010) on the anthropology of madness. Guidorizzi applies a comparative methodology and focuses *inter alia* on social functionalism, without engaging with the textual features of the texts he uses, which differ in terms of discourse and genre.

values and truth, only then to be replaced by the isolation and deprivation of meaning inflicted on the 'mad', as described in the symbolic case study of Pierre Rivière (1973). In clinical environments, the spirit of Foucault's critique found echoes in a general 'anti-psychiatric movement' that began with the works of psychiatrists such as R. Laing in England (see, e.g., Laing 1959/60) and most famously T. Szasz (*The Myth of Mental Illness*, 1961; *The Manufacture of Madness*, 1970) in the United States.[7] These thinkers began to question the validity and legitimacy of psychiatric diagnosis itself, to say nothing of psychiatric institutional confinement.[8] There was much potential for extremism and dilettantism in these attitudes and especially in their legacies. Porter's comments on this debate are conclusive: in his 1987 *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (itself with important theoretical reflections and a vivid commitment to the need to follow, as far as possible, the voices of patients when drafting a history of insanity), he definitively demystifies the 'romantic primitivism' of a view that underplays the very real suffering and loneliness of the insane by turning it into a matter of power struggle, exclusion and dominance of particular cultural patterns.[9]

If we look at socio-historical studies in the field, among general cultural surveys of madness, that of Leibbrand and Wettley (a psychiatrist and an historian of medicine, respectively) offers a monumental history from antiquity to modern psychoanalysis in *Der Wahnsinn: Geschichte der*

[7] For a survey of the American movement within this critique starting as early as the 1950s, see Scull (2011) 83–124; Richert (2014).

[8] See Porter (2002) 207–12 on this topic; Scull (2011) 89–97. Porter quotes the popular film *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) as exemplary of the cultural wave of scepticism and distrust towards psychiatry, and discusses the politics and ideology of this movement in the 1960s and 1970s. It is in this context that the famous 'Rosenhan experiment' took place. The experiment, conducted by Szasz and his psychiatrist colleague D. Rosenhan and reported in the 1973 issue of *Science*, consisted of having eight 'pseudopatients' fake a fixed set of hallucinatory symptoms for a short period of time to gain admission to twelve psychiatric hospitals in five different American states. The fake patients were admitted and hospitalised. Subsequently, they all claimed to feel entirely recovered. Nonetheless, in every case they were forced to admit that they were suffering from a mental illness and to take antipsychotic drugs. Most were diagnosed with schizophrenia and did not manage to gain release from the institutions without external intervention. Fascination with the undeniable plasticity, relativity and dangers of diagnoses of insanity was in the Western imagination long before Foucault. As Fontaine (2013) observes, in his *Menaechmi* (and its unknown Greek model) Plautus presents a wonderful dramatisation of how little it takes to be diagnosed as mad under the right circumstances. Nor is there any way to improve on how Chekov's wonderful *Ward Number Six* describes the swift process that can turn a psychiatrist into a psychiatric patient.

[9] Porter (1987) 14; see 14–18 for the entire discussion. Kleinman (1991) 128–9 offers similar warnings, discussing the homologous 'dangerously romantic reverse ethnocentrism of wild anthropology', which discounts all biomedical psychiatric practice in marginalised communities as forms of cultural oppression; see also 184 on 'antipsychiatry'; Wakefield (1992a) 374–5 on 'the myth of the myth of mental disorder'.

abenländischen Psychopathologie (1960). The portion of the book treating the ancient world deals mostly with medical sources and offers a synchronically merged account of ancient 'psychopathology'. Clark's 1993 doctoral dissertation *The Balance of the Mind* focuses instead on antiquity; the work is a unique resource for its thorough survey of prose sources, adopting a sociological and 'factual' perspective, and is the most exhaustive and methodologically sound catalogue of instances of mental disorder as represented and perceived in ancient sources available, although it unfortunately remains unpublished. More recently, global accounts of insanity have adopted an historicising and anthropological outlook, but have also exercised caution about these deconstructionist attitudes. An exemplary attention to theoretical issues while discussing medical, literary and philosophical representations of mental disorder in antiquity can be found in the collection on *Mental Disorders in the Classical World* (2013a) edited by W. V. Harris, which is characterised by broad theoretical and historical perspectives.

The Emotions

Another independent, expanding field of research within cultural studies is the study of ancient emotions, in dialogue with the growth experienced by the study of the 'passions' in Western philosophy and of emotional life in psychological quarters. The emotions are an important part of the mental sphere and of mental disturbance, with shifting boundaries in modern as much as in ancient cultures. Beginning most notably with Konstan's monograph *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (2006), a number of studies and research groups have worked to reconstruct ancient emotions through a variety of sources (literary, epigraphical, visual), attempting to define the universal characteristics of the emotions and/or their culture-specific features, their relationships to agency and cognition, and their mode of expression in texts. The expansion of this field of research to include medicine is earnestly to be hoped for.[10]

[10] Chaniotis and his research group have made fundamental contributions to this development in recent years: Chaniotis (2011, 2012, 2013), Chaniotis and Ducrey (2013). For theoretical discussions as well as historical analysis, see also the essays in Harbsmeier and Möckel (2009); Braund and Most (2003; especially Hanson and Harris) and Harris (2003, 2004) on anger; Sanders et al. (2013) on eros; Sanders (2014) on envy and jealousy. On medical emotions specifically, see Horstmanshoff (1999b) on Caelius Aurelianus; Thumiger (2016b) on fear and hope in classical medicine; King (2013) on grief in Galen; Kazantzidis (in press b) on the emotions in the Hippocratic texts.

Literary Approaches

One entire strand of scholarship has dealt with madness in its literary representations in various genres, even suggesting an alleged congeniality of mental disturbance with literature and creativity, its 'artistic' quality: imagery, terminological and stylistic facts are its expressive means, even a sort of 'aura' which is seen to pervade texts in different ways. These approaches and the results they yield vary immensely, but they have in common a focus on the artistic, creative expression of the experience of insanity.

In 1970, J. Mattes published *Der Wahnsinn im griechischen Mythos und in der Dichtung bis zum Drama des fünften Jahrhunderts*, which stands out as a literary study of enormous clarity and encyclopedic thoroughness, the best review available of mythological and poetic motifs related to insanity in the ancient world. The other classics (both far more philosophically engaged) are R. Padel's studies of the language of the mind in the Greek world, with special reference to tragedy: *In and Out of the Mind* (1992) and *Whom Gods Destroy* (1995). These remain central contribution to the study of the language and idiom of mental life and have much to offer to the understanding of medical texts as well, with a focus on madness as exogenous and passively undergone by the subject.[11] Other works have attempted broad narratives of insanity in literature (sometimes at the risk of sacrificing the diversity of their material to a desire for a consequential story): A. Thiher's 2004 *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature*, and more convincingly along partly similar lines Toohey's 2004 *Melancholy, Love, and Time: Boundaries of the Self in Ancient Literature*. M. Ciani (*Psicosi e creatività nella scienza antica*, 1983) discusses ancient medicine and science, but with a fundamentally ahistorical, literary and poetic approach. Others have concentrated on the role that a concept of madness plays in specific genres and/or historical contexts, such as D. Hershkowitz in her important *The Madness of Epic* (1998), and Beta (1999) on tragedy and comedy. A last example is L. Fratantuono's interpretation of central chapters of Latin literary history in terms of the relationship they bear to madness (2007, 2011, 2012). Some (not all) of these works respond to a concept of insanity that is transhistorical, non-medical and perhaps vaguely romanticised along lines that

[11] On tragedy and madness, with a valuable assessment of Padel's contribution, see Gill (1996a). On tragedy, see also the sections on *follia* in Guardasole (2000); Holmes (2008); Holmes (2010) 228–74 on Euripides; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1986/1990), esp. 204, 403–9; Pigeaud (1981/2006) 373–439; Williams (1993).

are partly post-Platonic, partly Foucaultian in inspiration. As such, this insanity has little to do with the experienced madness of ancient human beings, but becomes a category of hermeneutics of reception. Finally, mention must be made of the special role the ancient world for its part has played in the development of the study of the mind in the twentieth century, especially in the case of psychoanalysis and its history. As epitomised by his 1936/1972 'A disturbance of memory on the Acropolis', the relationship of Western man to his Greek past was at the centre of Freud's reflection on the mind, the self and psychological life. In the role played by ancient myth in the elaboration of key Freudian concepts (famously but not exclusively in the Oedipal conflict), in Jung's interest in and use of mythological figures as archetypal to the human psyche, and in Lacan's reading of ancient myths and even texts (e.g. his elaboration on Antigone in *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 1986/1997), the classical past has provided a kind of psychological matrix for the study of human mental life. While the mutual commerce between the ancient world and psychoanalytical approaches was already implicit in B. Simon's *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece* (1978), these topics have been explored more recently, and critically, by R. Bowlby, *Freudian Mythologies* (2007); R. H. Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (2006); and in two edited collections, Zajko and O'Gorman (2013) on psychoanalytical reception of ancient myth, literature and philosophy, and, from a Jungian perspective, Rutter and Singer's (2015) *Ancient Greece, Modern Psyche: Archetypes Evolving*.

Historical Psychoanalysis

It is thus unsurprising that Freudian psychoanalysis was an important stimulus for interest in ancient mental life, with B. Simon's 1978 *Mind and Madness* being the earliest comprehensive example of a psychoanalytical study of Greco-Roman culture. At the height of this trend, notable psychoanalytical readers offered interpretations of ancient myths (e.g. Caldwell's *The Origin of the Gods: A Psychoanalytic Study of Greek Theogonic Myth*, 1989) or plays, in both cases following the guidelines of Freudian theory or other schools of thought (Devereux 1970a, 1970b, 1976 on tragedy, Sappho and dreams in Greek sources, respectively; Sale's studies of Euripidean tragedy, 1972, 1977). Although this is an important chapter in the history of the discipline, many of these efforts are now of more interest for the cultural attitudes they reflect than for their insights into the ancient material. This is not to deny that Freudian readings may