FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN PSYCHIATRY · VOLUME 1

La Mélancolie (1897)

Roubinovitch and Toulouse's Clinical Study of Melancholia

The first English translation of its key chapters, with a commentary by **Kenneth S. Kendler** and **Virginia Justis**



"I would like to, but I cannot."

In 1897 two young psychiatrists at the Sainte-Anne asylum in Paris published a 420-page study of the illness we now call major depression. Their patients, they wrote, often described the loss of will in exactly these words. Awarded the Prix Lefèvre of the French Académie de médecine, the book then vanished from the English-language literature for more than a century.

Read today, it shows that clinicians have agreed on the core of depression for more than 125 years.

9 of 9
DSM-5 criteria for major depression, all described

18 of 18
classic symptoms and signs of 20th-century textbooks

14
case histories translated, with the 1897 photographs

125+
years between the original and its first English translation

A FORGOTTEN LINK IN THE HISTORY OF DEPRESSION

1874
Krafft-Ebing's *Melancholia* sums up the German tradition

1897
La Mélancolie does the same for France; Prix Lefèvre

1902
William James quotes one of its cases on the "sick soul"

2024
First English translation, in *Genomic Psychiatry*

2027
Published as a book: Foundations of Modern Psychiatry, Vol. 1

WHAT THE COMMENTARY EXPLORES

Thoroughness
Symptoms, subtypes, course and outcome in vivid detail

From judgment to mood
Melancholia becomes a disorder of mood, with or without psychosis

Mental pain
A "pain without lesion" that colors every impression

How delusions form
Guilt and ruin as explanations the sufferer gives for the pain

Suffering and resignation
Active pain with "psycho-physical decrease" at the core

Lived experience
Anhedonia and derealization, central to depression today



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