

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn: Depression as Political Resistance

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Abstract In this essay, I explore the political significance of depression, particularly as a prominent form of resistance to conditions of life under contemporary global capitalism. After noting the political context of the second beatitude, which suggests a form of mourning that bears witness to public suffering, I assert that under the current dominance of the disease model, depression has lost its political voice. This loss is of grave concern given evidence that the culture of late capitalism (neoliberalism) has initiated a global epidemic of depression. I reframe depression as the final cry of souls diminished under these conditions. Finally, I denote the qualities of such souls, illustrating with a pastoral psychotherapy case summary. A dream presented during the termination phase not only provides a clinical presentation of the attributes of souls under neoliberal governance, but suggests how voice may ultimately be restored even when depression has become unconscious.

Keywords Depression · Melancholy · Neoliberalism · Capitalism · Political resistance · Soul

*This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.* (T. S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men,” 1925)

A colleague, a clinical psychologist, mentioned one of his patients reporting an event that occurred during his childhood. While attending Sunday School, a teacher had repeatedly requested that he remain seated. In exasperation she at last demanded: “Now, be still and stop being so defiant!” The little boy countered: “Okay, I’ll do what you say. But on the inside I’m still defiant!” (J. Kyne, personal communication, January 16, 2013). Most people, and clinicians in particular, are quite aware that human beings can inwardly resist even when behaviorally compliant. In this essay, I explore depression as an internal form of resistance. Furthermore, I assert that depression may often be resisting something in the sociopolitical domain and that in contemporary societies shaped by late capitalism (neoliberalism) this dimension of depression usually remains invisible, both to individual sufferers as well as their caregivers.¹

¹By *political* I do not mean something identical to what is usually intended by the term *politics*. I refer, rather, to something more encompassing—the origin, maintenance, and exercise of *power* in human relationships, particularly in what is normally recognized as the public order. However, as will become clear in this essay, I do not recognize a clear line between so-called private and public relationships.

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Such a claim is subject to overextension and misunderstanding. Therefore, I must at the outset offer three disclaimers. First, although I believe most occurrences of depression may include a political dimension, I am not suggesting this is the only factor in depression or that it always poses as the governing element. Depression is a complex human experience and cannot be reduced to simple or discrete causes. Issues originating within one's family of origin, trauma, complicated or accumulative losses, interpersonal relationships, or certain medical conditions are frequent contributors to depression. Current theories in neuroscience suggest that interpersonal relationship patterns and trauma shape the neural functioning of the brain, thus ensuring that ongoing life events will continue to trigger past trauma or chronic disappointments so that depressive dynamics are sustained or repeated. However, I must remark that even factors such as these emerge within a sociopolitical context that creates, sustains, or exacerbates their effects.

Second, some may object to the broad understanding of depression presented here. In this study the word covers a wide assortment of phenomena variously articulated as melancholy, mourning, major depression, sorrow, despair, grief, despondency, and general unhappiness. In psychotherapeutic practice and philosophical discourse it is frequently helpful to draw fine distinctions among these experiences. From the perspective of social and political dynamics, however, such discrepancies tend to become quite blurred. More importantly, as Horwitz and Wakefield (2007) have demonstrated, during the past several decades the meaning of depression has been expanded to take in virtually every form of human sadness. To ignore the currently dominant discourse regarding depression—in itself a political reality—would constitute a grave error in any exploration of the political significance of depression.

Finally, claiming that depression may arise as a form of refusal directed toward social powers that damage the self does not require a sentimental stance toward depression. In no way does it suggest that depression is in some way “good for you.” Nothing reduces the character of depression as both a tragic and insufferable experience. Although arguing that depression may be an instance of political resistance restores something of the “heroic melancholy” so forcefully criticized by Kramer (2005), what I am actually proposing is that depression is often paradoxical. Responding to Kramer's refutation of “glorified” depression, van den Bergh (2012b) observes:

. . . there is the real possibility that indeed melancholy at times *was* ambivalent, that means partly positive, opportunity, disclosure. And, most importantly, perhaps depression today could be, at least sometimes, two-faced too. Taking this possibility into account does, however, not mean opting for a reglorification of depression and melancholy. Anti-psychiatric reversals of normality and madness should be avoided. What we need to do is let the phenomenon speak for itself. What does it have to say? What does it have to tell us today? What does it tell us about our position in these late modern times? (pp. 48–49)

Indeed, something of depression's historic ambivalence is implied in the statement “blessed are those who mourn,” which, in its context within the Sermon on the Mount, also has to do with what is to be heard.

Following van den Bergh's suggestion, *I propose that the political meaning of depression becomes apparent only if depression finds its voice*. The dominant discourses of depression in societies of late capitalism view it simply as a disease. Thus the objective of care is basically to expunge this nuisance and render individuals, and the populace as a whole, optimistic, happy, and productive. As a result, depression is silenced and its political significance remains hidden. Observing that neoliberalism now dominates societies around the world, Couldry (2010) contends that it systematically denies voice while maintaining the illusion that everything and everyone is heard. Concurrently, Ehrenberg (2010) maintains that depression is the mood that typifies the current age. Taken altogether, and contrary to Kramer's vision (1993), this

indicates that we stand to learn a great deal about contemporary life by listening to depression rather than to Prozac. Furthermore, as Couldry's reasoning suggests, giving depression a voice could lead not only to individual empowerment but also to sociopolitical transformation.

In this paper, I conduct a reconnaissance of depression as political resistance through five approaches. First, I briefly inspect the political ramifications of the second beatitude, "blessed are those who mourn," and suggest that such a reading makes more sense than the normative renderings that focus solely on its meaning for individuals. Second, I investigate the recent history of how melancholy has been transformed into the illness designated as "major depression," thus silencing its voice and obscuring its political qualities. Third, I summarize evidence that depression has increased globally with the spread of neoliberal ideologies and practices since around 1980. Outlining the psychosocial impacts of neoliberalism, I argue that these effects establish the contemporary inducement for depressive resistance. Fourth, I attempt to portray an understanding of depression as the final cry of souls suppressed and diminished by what some have called total capitalism. Finally, I offer a dream submitted during a course of pastoral psychotherapy as a clinical demonstration of the qualities of such souls and as an example of how voice may be restored even when depression has become unconscious.

The despair that bears witness

What can it mean to proclaim "those who mourn," the gathering of the depressed, to be "blessed" (Matt. 5:4)? In normative New Testament scholarship, and certainly within Christian popular piety, this text is usually employed to address the private sufferings of individuals. According to Carter (2005), such an emphasis "says much about . . . contemporary individualism that conceives of religion as a private matter isolated from sociopolitical matters" (p. 150). Postcolonial readings, however, take a different turn. This approach focuses on "retrieving silenced voices" and "foregrounding the political" in biblical texts. Particular attention is given to "challenging dominant scholarship by foregrounding empire and related issues in texts and interpretations" (Segovia 2009, p. 207). In this spirit, Carter contends that Roman imperialism provides the context for interpreting the gospel of Matthew. According to Carter (2005), Matthew's audience suffered under the conditions of imperial Rome, a world marked by: (a) "vast societal inequalities, economic exploitation, and political oppression," (b) "tensions between the rich . . . and poor," (c) "pervasive displays of Roman power and control, including military presence," (d) "no separation of religious institutions and personnel from socioeconomic and political commitments," (e) "imperial theology or propaganda," and (f) "obvious signs, sounds and smells of the destructive impact of the imperial sociopolitical order structured for the elite's benefit: poverty, poor sanitation, disease, malnutrition, overwork . . . and social instability" (pp. 150–151).

Within this context a reference to "those who mourn" takes on a political and somewhat ominous tone. Although he preceded postcolonial biblical scholarship by decades, Bonhoeffer's reading of this beatitude appears particularly cogent:

By "mourning" Jesus, of course, means doing without what the world calls peace and prosperity: He means refusing to be in tune with the world or to accommodate oneself to its standards. Such men mourn for the world, for its guilt, its fate and its fortune. While the world keeps holiday they stand aside, and while the world sings, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," they mourn. They see that for all the jollity on board, the ship is beginning to sink. (1937/1995, p. 108)

Here mourning becomes a refusal, a standing aside, directed toward a sociopolitical hegemony. It is, in other words, a *political resistance*. It is the despair that bears witness.

Today's imperial power no longer looks like Rome (or Bonhoeffer's Nazi Germany). It is not constrained by borders, nor does it overtly annex lands as in the colonialisms of the past. It is not monolithic but transforms itself to adapt to local cultures. It prefers to control through persuasion and "common sense" rather than direct police or military coercion, though it often resorts to such action if "free markets" or the power of economic elites are threatened. It works not primarily through the direct imposition of one nation on other nations, but through the routine activities of international corporations and financial institutions. Otherwise, neoliberalism imposes precisely the same conditions that Carter describes as the typical effects of Roman imperialism. Moreover, it is the first hegemony to become truly global and is far more effective in its shaping of culture, human relationships, and even individual psychology than empires of old (Alexander 2008; Dufour 2008; Duménil & Lévy 2011; Harvey 1990, 2005; Jameson 1991; Rose 1999). I therefore will argue that the conditions of neoliberalism establish the current sociopolitical context for depression. Today it is these effects that depression may be said to resist. However, as Couldry (2010) has demonstrated, neoliberalism is exceptionally successful at reducing voices of opposition. This applies equally to the voices of those who mourn. It is to this matter that I must now turn.

"Major depression:" melancholy loses its voice

Perhaps few people today can recall that prior to the advent of "major depression" as a formal diagnosis melancholy referred to a long history in which sadness, sorrow, and even the unfeeling depths of severe depression pointed to something outside itself. This frequently included reference to social and political circumstances, in which this mood was believed to be rooted. What came to be known as "heroic melancholy" thus demanded a degree of respect (Kramer 2005, pp. 211–231). Forms of this view persisted into the 20th century, finding expression in Freud's later theorizing, most famously in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930/1961), in which he saw the neuroses, including those characterized by melancholy, as compromises between the demands of society and individual desires. Psychoanalysis regarded depression as a symptom, as any other, that required the analyst to pursue its inner *meaning*. Thus it was not simply to be treated, but heard and understood. By mid-century several psychoanalysts in the United States, most notably Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, and Erich Fromm, were emphasizing the role of social troubles in the genesis of psychiatric problems, including depression. Blazer identifies such figures as sources of what came to be known in the United States as "social psychiatry" (Blazer 2005, pp. 59–76). In this approach, "Society, not just the individual, was the patient. To treat depression, one must treat a depressogenic society. This focus on society was considered the most effective means of reducing the burden of depression" (p. 7). By the 1960s, social psychiatry was flourishing, paralleled by community psychology and the community mental health center movement, and became a cornerstone in the public health policies of the Kennedy administration (pp. 5–8, 59–76).

Suddenly, during the 1970s, everything changed. In my judgment the revolution in psychiatry during this decade is directly linked to the rise of neoliberalism, which was coming into power at the same time. The spread of neoliberal ideology through the Chicago School of Economics and its international affiliates achieved political results following the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the United States 1 year later (Harvey 2005, pp. 19–63). The hegemonic intentions of this new ideology were signaled by Thatcher's slogan, so omnipresent in political discourse it became known simply as TINA, or "There Is No Alternative" (Steger & Roy 2010, p. 21). One of the essential elements of neoliberalism is the claim that both achievements and problems are the responsibility of individuals rather than social

or political structures. Thus Thatcher declared there was “no such thing as society, only individual men and women” (Harvey 2005, p. 23). Unsurprisingly, as Blazer (2005) observes, without apparent awareness of the origin of this change, social psychiatry “has all but disappeared primarily because interest in social context has vanished” (p. 77). The consequence for psychiatry is what Blazer discusses as “methodological individualism,” which focuses on “biological origins and person-specific treatments” (p. 8). This shift quickly led to policy changes. In 1980 the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) was advised to shift its research commitments “to neuroscience and related brain and behavior research.” And in 1982 the Reagan administration directed the NIMH to cease supporting “social problems research.” The 1990s were subsequently designated by President George H. W. Bush as the “decade of the brain” (p. 89).

It is in this context, in 1980, that the American Psychiatric Association published the third edition of its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*. Here, the separate diagnosis “major depression” officially appeared for the first time (Blazer, pp. 5, 27). From this point forward, “major depression is . . . conceived of as a biological disease constructed around the medical model and treated by biological interventions. . . . The implied cause links depression to biochemical and neurological conditions” (p. 35). Combined with a concerted and heavily funded effort to “educate” the public about major depression, the release of fluoxetine (Prozac) to the market in 1987, the appearance of the best-selling book *Listening to Prozac* (Kramer 1993), and the approval of direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising for antidepressants in the late 1990s, this led the diagnosis to become one of the most sensational marketing successes of modern times. Today most people in the United States would have difficulty considering depression anything other than a “brain disease.” This perception persists despite the absence of solid empirical evidence that detectable aspects of brain functioning are causes rather than symptoms of depression and despite current research questioning the efficacy of antidepressants, most recently summarized by Goldacre (2012).

The current status of major depression is a political achievement in itself. Hirshbein (2009) asserts: “To make the claim, as many do, that depression is a *real* disease—just like other diseases such as cancer or heart disease—is to make a historically contingent, political statement” (p. 6). It is not only a political achievement for psychiatry, ensuring its position in the practice of medicine, but it serves the interests of neoliberal economies. On the one hand, it makes treatment less costly and more efficient—two of the chief values of neoliberalism. Also, depression is an enemy of neoliberalism because happy consumers and producers are better consumers and producers. Reducing depression thus makes the entire system more efficient and profitable. Neoliberalism also emphasizes individual freedom and personal initiative, which are severely undermined by depression. In Kramer’s (2005) words, “Depression is the opposite of freedom” (p. 14). On the other hand, this understanding of depression shields neoliberalism from awareness of its ill effects on human beings. Human misery is no longer due to any sort of sociopolitical oppression, but is the responsibility of individuals themselves. Bluntly stated, they are simply unhappy because their brains are sick. Ultimately, this increases the suffering of depressed individuals. Their shame is increased because they have only themselves to blame and only they are responsible for getting themselves well again.

The end result is that the voice of melancholy is silenced. It no longer speaks to anything beyond itself. In the words of van den Bergh (2012a):

Today we look at depression the Kramerian way. ‘Heroic melancholy’ belongs to the past, prosaic despondency is our present-day burden. A plain disease, nothing more and nothing less. A ‘mood disorder’ that can be fixed. An interruption of productivity and mobility that should be repaired. Via SSRI’s—the novel anti-depressants—or deep-brain stimulation, or *nervus vagus* irritation, or other similar technical tools. (p. 3)

Melancholy has not only lost its voice, it fails to recall that it ever had a voice, or even desires to have one. The question simply does not arise.

None of this would be such a problem if major depression were narrowly defined, leaving other forms of sadness to fill the roles of protest. But, alas, such is not the case. Horwitz and Wakefield (2007) have documented how the diagnosis of major depression has been expanded to include virtually any occurrence of sadness. In the third and fourth editions of the *DSM* a clause is included that prevents the diagnosis from being applied to normal bereavement for a period of 2 months. As Horwitz and Wakefield observe, *this clause is an implicit admission that some forms of normal intense sadness might otherwise meet the criteria for major depressive disorder*. At the same time, it indicates that *only* this type of sadness can be excluded (p. 9). In December of 2012, however, a panel of psychiatrists made the final and formal decision that in the upcoming fifth edition of the *DSM* this exclusion will be dropped. For the first time in history a condition once seen as an expectable response to the death of a loved one can be authoritatively diagnosed as a mental disorder, a fact bemoaned by Wakefield during a radio interview (Cornish & Block 2012). The steady campaign to subsume all human despondency within major depressive disorder has now become complete.

This much-anticipated development has led many to ask, “Is emotional pain necessary?” (Spiegel 2010). Such a question points to a pervasive attitude that has accompanied the move to place all sadness under the umbrella of mental disorder, rooted in a barely hidden belief that melancholy constitutes a public enemy. There is now, in other words, an *aversion* to sadness. Perhaps this is implied in the title to Kramer’s (2005) other well-known book, *Against Depression*. This attitude leads to what Greenberg (2010b) called “the war on unhappiness” or what Levine (2007) designated as “the unhappiness taboo” (pp. 36–37). In neoliberal societies, with their insistence on individual initiative, industry, and freedom, and with their resolve to have cheerful consumers and workers who do not complain, it is scarcely surprising that depression would be viewed as, at best, a pathology or, at worst, willful noncompliance. A number of researchers have documented massive and global neoliberal efforts to simultaneously reduce depression while making individuals responsible for managing their own moods (Gardner, n.d.; Teghtsoonian 2009; Timimi 2012).

What holds sway today, then, is quite the opposite of depression as resistance, political or otherwise. Responding to Kramer’s assertion that Prozac would prove to be a “progressive force,” Greenberg (2010a) flatly observes: “I’m not so sure about this. Prozac doesn’t seem to have told any of Kramer’s patients to take to the streets” (p. 362). He continues:

The two decades since Prozac was introduced have seen enormous increases in injustices like the widening gap between rich and poor . . . but they haven’t exactly been a period of nonconformity or rebellion. Indeed, what SSRIs seem to do best, when they work at all, is to help patients live with less anguish in the world as they have found it. (p. 362)

Parens (2004) concurs, referring to antidepressants as “so-what drugs” that “facilitate better performance in an often cruelly competitive, ‘capitalist’ culture” (p. 29). What drugs cannot accomplish may be addressed by cognitive-behavioral therapies such as “positive psychology,” which are now being utilized to enhance “human flourishing” under even the most horrifying conditions, such as modern combat (Greenberg 2010b, pp. 32–35). Thus what might have become revolt is replaced by the modern equivalent of the “silence of the lambs.” The inward resistance of depression is exchanged for glib acquiescence. What now must be explored is whether neoliberalism bears responsibility for the debilitating social conditions to which Greenberg, Parens, and others refer and whether it contributes to what has become a global pandemic of depression.

Depression and the diminished soul under total capitalism

That the global incidence of depression has been increasing sharply now appears beyond dispute. Some, notably Horwitz and Wakefield (2007), have contradicted this by arguing that the supposed increases are accounted for by expanding definitions of depression. However, recent research efforts to apply standardized criteria to international populations, particularly those conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Kessler et al. 2007), have confirmed what many have come to designate as a worldwide depression epidemic. Indeed, as cited by van den Bergh (2012b, p. 43), the WHO has declared that “depression will soon be the second leading cause of disability worldwide.” Moreover, there is evidence that the rate of depression has been rapidly increasing during the period of neoliberal ascendancy. For example, in one study involving surveys of adults in the United States (Compton et al. 2006) the 1-year prevalence of depression rose almost 4 % in the decade between 1991–1992 and 2001–2002. The body of research conducted since 1980 has become so large that a review is well beyond the scope of this study, but it has been summarized most recently by Hidaka (2012), who designates depression as “a disease of modernity.” Indeed, the idea that depression characterizes the current age is supported by a number of authors (e.g., Dufour 2008; Ehrenberg 2010; van den Bergh 2012b). In this section I will explore neoliberalism as an origin of depression and identify key features that suggest an intimate connection between them.

Up to this point I have not paused to define neoliberalism or describe the scope of phenomena embraced by the term. Harvey (2005) offers the following synopsis:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 2)

Centeno and Cohen (2012) observe that neoliberalism may be described from three perspectives: as a set of economic theories and practices, as a system of political power, and as a culture that has become pervasive and even hegemonic. The economics emerged in what became known as the “Washington Consensus,” identified by “fiscal austerity, market-determined interest and exchange rates, free trade, inward investment deregulation, privatization [of public properties and utilities], market deregulation, and a commitment to protecting private property” (p. 319). The politics of neoliberalism collapses the gap between economics and politics. Here the state assumes the role of guarantor of the smooth functioning of markets and uses its power on the side of business interests and large corporations. Government colludes with neoliberal attacks on social welfare and opposes collectives that threaten to push back against business interests, including unions, citizen advocacy organizations, and civil and religious groups that work for social justice. Finally, in cultural terms neoliberalism constitutes what Kuhn called a dominant paradigm or what Gramsci called a hegemony (p. 328). At this level neoliberalism becomes simply a way of life, even for people who may have never heard of the term. Significantly, the global recession that ensued in 2008 has challenged neoliberal assumptions but has not brought about transformation. Centeno and Cohen conclude: “There do not appear to be any economic, political, or ideational alternatives in sight” (p. 332).

While the economic and political aspects are intrinsically involved in the origins of the current depression epidemic, the cultural dimension of neoliberalism requires special consideration. Couldry (2010) observes: “Neoliberalism insists that there is no other valid principle of human organization than market functioning” (p. 11). This principle applies to all forms of social participation and even to private relationships. These are subject to the ever-

familiar cost-benefit analysis and concern for self-interest. Appeals to collective identity, obligation, personal commitment, shared sacrifice, or basic rights are considered passé or even oppressive. The concerns of the sovereign individual self demand the highest priority. And even the self is finally reduced to a commodity in an increasingly invasive market of authenticity. This leads theologian Harvey Cox (1999) to conclude:

So now The Market is not only around us but inside us, informing our senses and our feelings. There seems to be nowhere left to flee from its untiring quest. Like the Hound of Heaven, it pursues us home from the mall and into the nursery and the bedroom. (para. 22)

Indeed, the presence of the market “inside us” leads Cvetkovich (2012) to conclude that depression is how neoliberalism *feels*: “Depression . . . is thus a way to describe neoliberalism and globalization, or the current state of political economy, in affective terms” (p. 11).²

The three dimensions of neoliberalism work together to produce a number of effects that have been correlated with the prevalence of depression. Though these may be enumerated in a variety of ways, I will condense them to six: inequality, consumerism, individualism, erosion of self, social alienation, and loss of meaning.³ It is appropriate to consider inequality first, because it has been integral to neoliberal goals from the beginning. In the United States, where it was first implemented, neoliberalism arose as a strategy to restore power to the upper class following several decades during which their wealth had been eroded (Duménil & Lévy 2011, pp. 7–70; Harvey 2005, pp. 16–19). A number of economists, most notably Piketty and Saez (2003), have documented the surge of inequality in the United States since neoliberal policies began to be implemented in 1980. Remarkably, this trend has only worsened since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008 (Saez 2013). Moreover, similar increases in inequality have materialized globally wherever neoliberal policies have been adopted (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2011).

Inequality has been positively correlated with increases in the incidence of depression. Using data compiled by the WHO, Hidaka (2012, p. 210) has carefully reconstructed the rates of depression in several developed countries and graphed them against rates of inequality. The results are shown in Fig. 1. Countries with the highest inequality, such as the United States, also have an increased prevalence of mood disorders, particularly depression. These results are congruent with the conclusions of Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), who attribute the increase in depression to the heightened status anxiety that accompanies high levels of inequality.

Consumerism, an indelible feature of neoliberal societies, appears to have an impact on depression separate from considerations of inequality. This may help explain the otherwise counterintuitive finding that wealthier countries, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, tend to have higher rates of depression (Hidaka 2012, p. 207). Political scientist Robert Lane’s *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies* (2000) is the most comprehensive study on this enigma to date. Lane questions the assumptions of free market

² I came upon Cvetkovich’s work after completing this essay. Like me, she views depression as a political phenomenon and cites neoliberalism as its current context. However, her book is primarily autobiographical, literary, and historical in its approach and does not elaborate upon the connections between depression and neoliberalism.

³ In another work I discovered upon completion of this writing, Walker (2010) also outlines the correlation between depression and neoliberalism. Of the six effects discussed here, Walker addresses four. (He appears to leave aside detailed examination of the impact on subjectivity as well as the erosion of meaning.) His work is the only source I have found that, congruent with the argument I have made here, ties the medicalization of depression since the 1980s to the spread of neoliberal ideology and culture.

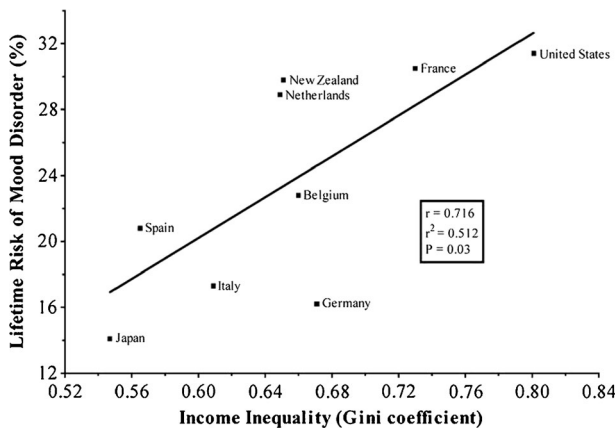


Fig. 1 Inequality increases the prevalence of depression (used by permission, Elsevier Limited, license number 3112010972047)

advocates who equate economic prosperity with happiness and attributes the increasing depression in such societies to their materialistic and consumerist character (pp. 141–192). Schwartz concurs, noting that the “tyranny of choice” in consumerist cultures yields an increase in personal suffering and depression (2000, 2004). Such claims have been supported by empirical research. For example, four experiments recently conducted by psychologists at Northwestern University demonstrated that consumerist cues, such as those used in advertising, caused a measurable increase in depressed mood (Bauer et al. 2012).

It appears likely that the negative effects of consumerism on well-being are exacerbated by the radical individualism within neoliberal societies. I have mentioned that neoliberalism ignores the determinative power of social structures and places responsibility for all outcomes squarely on the shoulders of individuals. There is empirical evidence that a person’s socioeconomic status has less impact on “subjective well-being” (which includes measures for depression) than their “sociometric status,” that is, whether they feel they have the respect of their peers (Anderson et al. 2012). At the same time, neoliberalism “needs individuals to believe that their relative worth is reflected in their accumulation of wealth and capacity to consume” (Kasser et al. 2007, p. 12). Finally, adding inequality to the equation results in “expenditure cascades,” wherein people compare themselves to the financially successful and respond with more consumption (Frank et al. 2010). Taken together, these factors strongly suggest that *shame* plays a central role in the founding of depression. This is supported by Scheff’s (2001, n.d.) claim that depression arises socially from “recursive shame-based spirals” in which the individual who sees herself as depressed feels she is responsible for her predicament and thus becomes more depressed. Likewise, Schwartz (2004) contends that depression becomes rampant in societies where individuals blame themselves for their apparent failures rather than seeing their problems as rooted in social circumstances (pp. 201–217). Ehrenberg (2010) sums this up concisely when he states that depression in the age of the “sovereign self” arises as “an *illness of responsibility* in which the dominant feeling is that of failure. The depressed individual is unable to measure up; he is tired of having to become himself” (p. 4, emphasis in original).

Recognition of the role of shame in contemporary depression already points to the impact of neoliberalism on the experience of self. However, much more is at stake here than simply self-esteem. What is occurring is nothing less than a dispersion or erosion of self. Elsewhere

this has been described as an “atomization” and “liquidation” of self that is both the product and requirement of neoliberal society:

Indeed, global capitalism does not simply produce the multiple, discontinuous, fluid self, it *needs* it. This self, what I have called the atomized and liquid self, is uniquely capable of plugging into the next promoted product or service. *In fact, it has no basis for refusing to do so.* (Rogers-Vaughn 2012, p. 217)

Gergen (1991) refers to this phenomenon as the “saturated self” and concludes that selfhood is threatened with extinction: “The fully saturated self becomes no self at all” (p. 7). Likewise, Couldry (2010) observes that some post-structuralist philosophies have called for the disposal of the notion of self and that this is unwittingly complicit with the neoliberal paradigm (pp. 14–15, 93–96). Dufour (2008) asserts that neoliberalism demands that the individual “be yourself” but deprives her of the ground to accomplish this. In concurrence with Ehrenberg, he perceives this as the source of the contemporary depression epidemic and concludes: “It therefore seems to me that depression should not be hypostasized into a natural ‘mental illness’. It should be seen as a difficulty with subjectivation” (p. 73). Dufour argues that this situation, and neoliberalism itself, is equivalent to the postmodern condition, a claim echoed by a number of others (e.g., Gergen 1991; Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991).

Neoliberalism appears to achieve this reduction of self by social isolation, cutting individuals off from deep connection with others and from social institutions. Thus Bourdieu (1998) describes neoliberalism as “*a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives*” and asserts that its twin goals are “the destruction of all the collective institutions capable of counteracting the effects of the infernal machine” and “the imposition everywhere . . . of that sort of moral Darwinism that . . . institutes the struggle of all against all and *cynicism* as the norm of all action and behavior” (para. 4, 14, emphasis in original). Dufour (2008) refers to this effect as “deinstitutionalization,” whereas Alexander (2008) calls it “psychosocial disintegration.” Both see neoliberalism as causing a global pandemic of the breakdown of community. The consequence is that even private relationships are commodified and “outsourced” (Hochschild 2012) and “networks” are established in which people “replace the few depth *relationships* with a mass of thin and shallow *contacts*” (Bauman 2004, p. 69). Olson even argues that neoliberalism is eroding the capacity for empathy, the basis on which all human relationships are made possible (2013).

Social alienation has long been identified as a major contributor to depression. Indeed, Lane (2000) has documented the current loss of community in market democracies as *the* source of unhappiness in those societies. Putnam (2000), in his now famous work on the erosion of civic engagement and community in the United States, isolates several factors in this development without identifying neoliberalism as the paradigm that connects them (though he almost recognizes it, pp. 282–283). However, he too identifies this loss as the root factor in the increase of depression in the United States (pp. 261–265, 331–335). In their studies of depression, both Levine (2007) and Karp (1996) locate its primary source as a lack of public life and meaningful, intimate relationships, which, in turn, they attribute to consumerism and free market capitalism. Karp concludes: “Depression, at its root, is a disease of disconnection” (p. 178).

Finally, social alienation seems inextricably tied to a pervasive loss of meaning. Dufour (2008) argues that a key feature of total capitalism is the “desymbolization” of life. This also appears in the work of theologian Edward Farley (1996), who characterizes postmodernity as an age in which “deep symbols” have been eroded. What is at issue here is the ability to make sense of one’s experience or, more accurately, to *narrate* one’s existence, both individually and corporately. This is what Couldry (2010) calls “voice” and is the reason I have chosen this term as a guiding theme for this essay. Voice, declares Couldry, is “the process of giving account of

one's life and its conditions." He adds, "To give such an account means telling a story, providing a narrative." He also contends that it is intrinsically social: "Voice is not the practice of individuals in isolation" (p. 7). Couldry proceeds to offer a discussion of neoliberalism as a systematic suppression of voice. *In this context I propose that depression appears as a mood that has lost its voice or whose voice has been suppressed or corrupted by the dominant discourse.*

The connection between voice and sociality introduces the question of religion, for religions are essentially *communities of meaning*, historical collectivities that speak through a shared narrative. This does not mean contemporary forms of religions should necessarily be idealized. Indeed, under neoliberal practices religion is just another public holding that has become privatized. Carrette and King (2005) have surveyed the methods by which late capitalism has acquired the assets of religion, broken them apart, and sold off the components as spiritual commodities. The corruption of religion and theology by neoliberalism has also been documented by Rieger (2009). By now it is quite difficult to discern the difference between "authentic" religion and "virtual" religion. Following the rationale of Couldry, I would suggest that the voices of historic religions have thereby been silenced, suppressed, or corrupted. They now either must serve their new master or they have become marginalized. Depression potentially may present itself, then, as a distinctively *religious* problem, a loss not just of self but of *soul*. In the following section I therefore will reframe depression as a *pastoral* issue, as a disorder of soul.

Depression as the final dissent of soul

Historically, pastoral care has been understood within the tradition of the care of souls. Lately the term *soul* has appeared to fall into disrepute, leading pastoral theologian Herbert Anderson (2001) to ask: "Whatever happened to *Seelsorge* (the care of souls)?" (p. 32). While Anderson attributes the disappearance of the term from contemporary theology to its association with dualistic (body vs. soul) thinking, I suspect it also involves the current aversion to essentialist thought. For many, "soul" connotes a substance or essence of the human that is eternal, universal, and beyond history. I share the opinion that dualistic and essentialist views of soul are no longer helpful. However, I believe the idea of soul deserves retrieval and reframing. First, even though many theologians now avoid the term, it remains in broad use in cultural literature, both in popular (e.g., Moore 1992) and academic (e.g., Rose 1999) settings. This presents an opportunity for theology to improve its standing as a public discourse. Second, such retrieval may counter the radical individualism within the neoliberal paradigm, including the individualistic assumptions that appear to swirl around alternative terms such as "spirit" and "spirituality." Third, this reframing might oppose neoliberalism's suppression of the category of transcendence, the near-elimination of the conviction that there may be a value more ultimate than the discrete agendas of both the "sovereign self" and corporations. Finally, a retrieval of the notion of soul promises an alternative frame for understanding how depression may represent a form of political resistance.

While self may be considered generally as individual self-consciousness and agency, I understand soul as an aspect of self, namely the capacity, or better, the *activity*, of self-transcendence. But what sort of transcendence is intended here? Theunissen (1977/1984) identifies two strands within Western philosophy that attempt to account for relationship between self and other. Each implies, in my judgment, a quite different idea regarding self-transcendence. The first, which Theunissen calls "the transcendental project" (pp. 13–163), originates in Descartes and finds articulation in Husserl's philosophy. Here, self-transcendence

is both *rational* and *individual*. It is a movement in which the individual, in an imaginative act of reason, exits herself and observes her own thoughts, feelings, and processes. It is thus objective and *objectifying*. Relation to the other is then mediated through an idea or image of the other constructed within this act of reason. My belief is that this project is congruent with understandings of knowledge as dependent on vision or “insight,” which Ihde (2007) refers to as the “visualism” that has dominated Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks (pp. 6–13). In this instance, self-transcendence appears as an activity of solitary individuals and is fully compatible with the neoliberal paradigm.

An alternative understanding of self-transcendence is suggested in what Theunissen (1977/1984) calls “the philosophy of dialogue,” most completely developed in the thought of Buber (pp. 257–344). Here, self-transcendence is dialogical and intersubjective. It arises within what Buber identifies as “the between” (1947/2002). Self-transcendence occurs not from some neutral standpoint within an individual’s rational act, but *from the standpoint of the other*. It appears as a form of knowledge that is intrinsically relational and, according to Ihde’s (2007) typology, is *auditory* rather than visual, depending on *listening* and *speaking*. This self-transcendence is an intersubjective, *social* act and cannot be achieved by isolated individuals. It lies outside cost-benefit calculations and concern for efficiency and thus is fundamentally incompatible with neoliberal culture. This is most apparent in what Johann (1966) calls “disinterested love.” “When love is interested,” observes Johann, “when the attraction is based on a motive of profit or need, it has no difficulty in finding words to justify itself.” Disinterested love, however, cannot explain itself: “Why do I love you? Because you are—*you*. That is the best it can do. It is indefensible” (p. 19). It is this sort of love, not the “interested” attachment of romantic love or desire for benefit, that forms the heart of authentic soul.

It is precisely soul in this sense that is crushed by neoliberal agendas. Attributing the erosion of dialogue to “the totalizing capacity of modernity-cum-capitalism,” Brueggemann (2012) concludes:

The loss of dialogic articulation, rendered impossible in modernist rationality, has led to complete abdication of dialogic capacity. . . . Either *cold absoluteness* or *totalizing subjectivity* leaves no possibility of mutual engagement of the kind that belongs to dialogic speech and life. (pp. 26, 29)

Similarly, Dufour (2008) argues that life under “the Market” eliminates transcendence and non-utilitarian relationships (pp. 64–70). Furthermore, he contends that it is so efficient in this reduction that it has created a “historic mutation” of human being (p. 13).

What this suggests is that soul, that activity that holds individuals in relation with self, others, and God, has all but disappeared. This should be of grave concern to any who are inheritors of the care of souls tradition. The human values, capacities, and experiences that were once the foci of pastoral care have become dispersed, diffuse, and perhaps even absent. Are we now increasingly caring for souls that are no longer there? Have we not now become T. S. Eliot’s “hollow men,” zombies of our former selves? Indeed, whereas Haraway (1985) once celebrated the “cyborg” as a version of liberated humanity, it seems now to have become the mindless, machine-like fate of vacuous servitude to capitalist consumption and “flex worker” production. Thus Turkle (2011) laments: “We are all cyborgs now” (p. 152). Both self and other are commodified and reduced to an object, an “it.” What remains is a relationship Buber might not have imagined: not an “I-Thou” or even an “I-it” relationship, but an “it-it” relationship.

It is just at this point that depression appears, paradoxically, as a symptom of hope. It signals that soul, while tragically weakened, has not disappeared without remainder. Wherever

resistance emerges it indicates some degree of presence of soul, however small or weak. Leader (2008) perceives this resistance:

The more modern society urges us to attain autonomy and independence in our search for fulfillment, the more resistance will take the form of the exact opposite of these values. It puts misery in the midst of plenty. Depression is thus a way of saying NO to what we are told to be. (p. 13)

Dufour concurs, proposing that the global depression epidemic is “one of the most evident signs of resistance of the subject to the economy of the generalised market” (as cited in van den Bergh 2012b, p. 48).

I conclude that depression embodies the final dissent of soul. It constitutes, as it were, the last outpost of the autoimmune system of soul. It is the visceral, organismic response of soul to a world no longer fit for human habitation. It is, in effect, the final cry of soul just this side of extinction. As “cry” it is not exactly voice, for it has lost the full ability to narrate or even announce its fate. A cry is emitted whenever the throat is constricted or insufficient breath remains to form words, or else the anguish is so great that the words of the story are temporarily forgotten. The cry is nonetheless a sound, a residue of voice. *It is the desperate desire to have a voice.* And because soul denotes the inseparability of self from others, the world, and the Infinite, it bemoans not only the imminent demise of self, but that of the other, the world, and the Eternal. It is, in brief, an expression of existential grief, the anguished sigh of lost love.

It becomes crucial, then, that depression not be anesthetized or extinguished. Rather, we should *listen* to it. If it has been silenced by those who declare it a “disorder,” we are compelled to assist it in reclaiming its voice. And what if even the cry has ceased, or the sigh is no longer discernible? Might there be a form of depression, especially in societies demanding cheerfulness and compliant productivity, that no longer exhibits the expected *mood*? Leader (2008), noting the character of depression as protest, declares: “As humans are taken to be units of energy in industrialized societies, they will resist, *whether they are conscious of this or not*” (p. 12, emphasis added). In the following section, the final phase of this reconnaissance, I will consider the clinical presentation of depression that has lost awareness as well as voice and entertain how it might yet be detected, amplified, and heard.

“It’s the end of the world as we know it (and I feel fine):” a clinical dream

In 1987 the American rock band R.E.M. released “It’s the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine).” The song, featuring stream-of-consciousness lyrics and a happy, upbeat tune that belie the chaos and despair of its content, might typify a character type that has become prominent in neoliberal culture. The basic elements of this character type had previously been outlined by Fromm (1976/1997), who was among the first to propose that “the character structure of the average individual and the socio-economic structure of the society of which he or she is a part are interdependent” (p. 109). Fromm termed this blending *social character* and suggested that every culture in every time period manifested its own distinctive form. The culture of late capitalism yields a type Fromm called the *marketing character*: “I have called this phenomenon the marketing character because it is based on experiencing oneself as a commodity, and one’s value . . . as ‘exchange value’. The living being becomes a commodity on the ‘personality market’” (p. 120). Such an individual constantly promotes herself on this market as a package that is reliable, ambitious, cheerful, and aggressive and connected with the right people. “The aim of the marketing character,”

Fromm adds, “is complete adaptation” (p. 121). Although he may participate in religious activities, he displays “little interest . . . in philosophical or religious questions, such as *why* one lives, and *why* one is going in this direction rather than in another.” Though such individuals may “have their big, ever-changing egos,” it is also true that “none has a self, a core, a sense of identity” (p. 121). With regard to affect, these human beings display (literally) the emotions considered appropriate to the situation and yet do not feel deeply. Fromm observes:

The marketing character neither loves nor hates. These “old-fashioned” emotions do not fit into a character structure that functions almost entirely on the cerebral level and avoids feelings, whether good or evil ones, because they interfere with the marketing characters’ main purpose: selling and exchanging—or to put it even more precisely, *functioning* according to the logic of the “megamachine” of which they are a part. (p. 121)

These individuals, in other words, fit quite comfortably into what Meštrović (1997) describes as “postemotional society.” Finally, Fromm (1953/2010) contends that the distinguishing mood for marketing types is *boredom* and insists that this is a veiled form of depression:

I would say that boredom is perhaps the word for a more normal average experience, which in pathology would be called *depression* and *melancholia*. *Boredom is the average state of melancholia, whereas melancholia is the pathological state of boredom that one finds in certain individuals.* (p. 60, emphasis in original)

However, because their experience of emotion is thin, such persons are often not aware of their mood as depression.

What Fromm identified as the marketing personality he elsewhere referred to as “the pathology of normalcy” (1953/2010; 1956/2010, pp. 12–21). This condition is reflected later in what Bollas (1987) calls “normotic illness” (pp. 135–156). Bollas summarizes:

A normotic person is someone who is abnormally normal. He is too stable, secure, comfortable and socially extrovert. He is fundamentally disinterested in subjective life and he is inclined to reflect on the thingness of objects . . . or on ‘data’ that relates to material phenomena. (p. 136)

Although he does not tie this phenomenon to capitalism and consumerism as overtly as Fromm, this context appears to be assumed. The normotic individual sees herself as “a commodity object in the world of human production” (p. 136). She “takes refuge in material objects” and “measures human worth by means of collections of acquired objects” (p. 138). She “may be a workaholic” and is essentially robot-like (p. 139), a reference that recalls Turkle’s previously cited resignation, “We are all cyborgs now.” The normotic individual is quite gregarious: “Indeed, he may be exceptionally adept at organizing dinners and parties.” But he is interpersonally shallow: “The capacity to speak frankly about one’s self, about one’s personality and feelings, is unknown” (p. 140). Normotic persons lack a sense of self and harbor a vague depression: “They are usually aware of feeling empty or without a sense of self, and they seek analytic help in order to . . . feel real or to symbolize a pain that may only be experienced as a void or an ache” (p. 136). Depressive states, while typifying such a person, “do not appear in a mentally elaborated form.” Rather, “they only slow him down in his otherwise ‘faultless’ pursuit of happiness” (p. 139).

Finally, in my clinical experience normotic individuals’ characteristic form of psychological survival is what Winnicott (1935/1975) named as “the manic defence” (p. 132). The chief

purpose is to mute “the anxieties belonging to depression” (p.132). This defense is so effective that it achieves a reversal of one’s inner reality. Winnicott stresses:

It is just when we are depressed that we *feel* depressed. It is just when we are manic-defensive that we are *least likely to feel* as if we are defending against depression. At such times we are more likely to feel elated, happy, busy, excited, humorous, omniscient, ‘full of life’, and at the same time we are less interested than usual in serious things and in the awfulness of hate, destruction, and killing. (p. 132, emphasis in original)

The manic defense operates through denial of inner reality, a flight into external reality, repression “of the *sensations* of depression,” and the “employment of almost any opposites in the reassurance against death, chaos, mystery, etc.” (pp. 132–134, emphasis in original).

Although neither Bollas nor Winnicott emphasize that normotic illness and the manic defense, respectively, are psychological correlates to a particular *sociopolitical* environment, I am proposing that they are best understood as features of Fromm’s marketing character. They are aspects of what Kierkegaard (1849/1980) identified as the most hopeless form of despair: “the despair that is ignorant of being despair” (pp. 42–47). Likewise, Kierkegaard might assert, it is a form of despair that “lacks infinitude,” or, in other words, is a reduction of humanity typical of the “mass man:”

Now this form of despair goes practically unnoticed in the world. Just by losing himself this way, such a man has gained an increasing capacity for going along superbly in business and social life, indeed, for making a great success in the world. . . . He is so far from being regarded as a person in despair that he is just what a human being is supposed to be. (p. 34)

I am proposing that this sort of person, the normotic individual engaged in manic defense, is the prototypical resident of neoliberal societies. Living as she does in “the end of the world as we know it,” and despite the facade of “feeling fine,” does she nevertheless conceal some residue or hint of depressive resistance?

I am confident that a majority of the people who now engage me in a pastoral psychotherapy relationship manifest some degree of the marketing personality. I will now briefly describe one such person and offer a dream she presented in therapy as both an example of residual depressive resistance and an exhibit of the presence of the sociopolitical within unconscious experience.⁴ This individual, a European American female in her mid-50s, engaged me weekly for pastoral psychotherapy for a period of 5 years. She initially presented with panic attacks, which in due course she recalled were triggered by driving past a location where she had been date-raped while in her mid-teens. She had never told anyone of the rape and had since forgotten the location where it had occurred. Upon making this connection, however, the panic attacks subsided. What then remained was a vague listlessness and emptiness that eluded description or interpretation. She soon began to describe a tragic history that seemed to explain why she had never told anyone of the rape. From about the age of 9 until around puberty she had been treated for recurrent vaginal infections, which, as she became aware, were related to having suffered repeated sexual abuse from a close male relative. She had also never revealed this history of abuse. In addition, she described a childhood spent playing in her room alone. Both parents were markedly emotionally detached. The family lived in a wealthy county and seemed to care only about maintaining an active

⁴ This individual has given full consent to my use of this material in this essay. Although I have withheld some information to preserve her anonymity, all the information presented here is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

social life and appearing happy and well-adjusted to other members of the community. As an adult she quit her own professional life after marrying a man who was becoming successful in the corporate world. They had several children and settled in the same affluent neighborhood in which she had grown up. Though chronically anxiety-ridden, she reported finding satisfaction in being a mother and indicated that her husband was a good man with whom she had a reasonably acceptable marriage. She carefully maintained a well-groomed and cheerful appearance but admitted that she felt bored, empty, and superficial. The two people with whom she most identified were one of her sons, a very depressed young man who by his late teens had already attempted suicide twice, and a former fiancé from her college days with whom she had re-established a long-distance, non-sexual, but emotionally intense relationship. She found her feelings for this man, a melancholic alcoholic, quite puzzling. But she agreed her identification with these two people revealed her own chronic loneliness and a depression that was well-concealed, including usually from herself.

Recently her spouse was transferred to a lucrative corporate position in another state and this terminated the therapy, though she occasionally schedules a session when in town to visit friends. A few weeks prior to termination she shared a dream:

In the dream I am in my home and there is a spinning something—like a tornado—*inside* my house. I am watching as it sucks everything into it—all my furniture and belongings—and I see it all spinning around in the twisting column. Then I notice my husband is also in the thing, turning round and round with everything else. And he says to me as he spins around: “Honey, I increased the business 75 % last year.” Then the dream ends.

When I inquired as to what feelings she was having within the dream she paused and finally said: “*Nothing. I felt nothing.*”

As is the case with dreams, this one held several useful interpretations, and we discussed each one in the final weeks of the therapy. It seemed to comment, for example, on her history of trauma—most of which had occurred within her home. It also appeared to be triggered by the impending move to an opulent home they were in the process of building, as well as in some way anticipating the termination of therapy. It rather ingeniously portrayed both her family life in her childhood and her present household life. Ostensibly everything looked great on the outside, but inside a storm was raging and chaos reigned. And as often seems the case with dreams, the dream-house in some way revealed the state of her very self, her soul. On the outside all appears well, but inside she is being evacuated. Even her affects, metaphorically speaking, are sucked into the vortex. Despite the horrifying circumstances, in the end she can feel nothing.

The crucial import for this essay, however, lies in the way this dream displays the *sociopolitical* location of the dreamer. More to the point, it displays how self, personal relationships, and society are seamlessly and inevitably interwoven. In Fromm’s words, the dream illustrates the *social character* of these neoliberal times. Fromm also argued that what is unconscious is not simply personal but *social*, and therefore even the dreams of individuals are penetrated by the society in which they live. This dream reveals self, relationships, and society in the same vein. They are all *consumed*, stripped of meaning (at least beyond production and consumption) and even of affect. Indeed, some aspects of the dream seem to require a social construal. The materialism implied in the dream is fairly evident. But most striking are the words spoken by the husband: “Honey, I increased the business 75 % last year.” He does not say, “Honey, I love you,” or “What are we going to do about this mess?” or even “Please help me!” This is not the language of dialogue, of intimate personal relationships, but of *the market*. He essentially gives her a business report. The husband’s importance is limited to his role as a *producer*, and this is implicitly accepted by the dreamer as well. (This interpretation was later confirmed by the response of her husband when she told him about the dream: “Oh, I did much

better than that!”) All this is rendered more striking, within the dream, by the obliviousness of both the husband and the dreamer to the devastation in which they are literally enveloped. It seems normal to them. In effect, the world as they know it is ending, but they feel fine.

Finally, the social layer of the dream may legitimately be regarded as a commentary on the neoliberal society that is woven into the dreamer’s existence. From this standpoint the house in the dream signifies the greater “household” of contemporary life in the United States. It is suggestive here to recall that the ancient Greek word for house (*oikos*) is also the root for the English word “economy.” The dream in this sense refers to a neoliberal culture in which relationships are reduced to the economy of the market, with their utility subject to cost-benefit analysis. It comments, moreover, on a society in which the most devastating effects for personal relationships are considered normal and in which meaning outside the discourse of the market has been evacuated. The dream suggests a society devoid of deeper emotions, in keeping with Meštrović’s provocative thesis concerning postemotional society (1997). Again, the house looks great and even opulent on the outside, but on the inside it is hollow.

This dream, then, is a signifier of the normotic character of the dreamer’s personality, of her personal relationships, and of her society as well. The emptiness it portrays points to the depression hidden within, a depression that has lost its mood and its self-awareness as well as its voice. It raises the appalling prospect that there are many depressed people who would escape even the enormously expanded definitions of depression that currently hold sway. In effect, these people would be depressed if they were more aware, if they experienced feelings beyond those required by superficial living within contemporary social networking.

At the same time, the dream, by oddly juxtaposing a horrible threat and absence of feeling, indicates a path forward. Rieger (2009) observes: “Resistance depends on the creation of alternative desires,” but notes that “desires cannot easily be controlled and redirected at the conscious level” (p. 115), indicating that they are not subject to cognitive-behavioral interventions. However, he cites McFague’s notion of “wild spaces” that do not conform to what a society accepts as “natural,” such as occurs “when confronting clinical depression” (p. 115), as places where resistant desires may emerge or be revealed. Indeed, by simply noting the peculiar lack of feeling in the dream, the dreamer was able to acknowledge both who she had become and a desire to be otherwise. She experienced the dream as a portrayal of her empty depression and began to understand her depression as a desire for something different, a resistance to her abnormally normal life. In brief, the dream pointed to a desire within her that opposed the “natural” desire, also within her, shaped by living in a society that valued only production and consumption. The dream aided a process in which she moved from a nameless boredom to awareness of depression to an inauguration of giving voice to her depression—a process that appears to continue beyond the termination of therapy.

Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed that the second beatitude, “blessed are those who mourn,” offers an apt metaphor for depressive resistance in the age of global neoliberalism. Those who mourn, the depressed, are blessed insofar as they bear witness to the veiled oppression of today’s global hegemony. The concealment of this subjugation is made more complete by a contemporary strategy in which depression is turned into an illness, thus silencing its political importance. This gagging of the voice of despair obscures the evidence that neoliberalism has founded a global epidemic of depression, such that denying depression any political reference is a way of covering its tracks. I have reframed depression as the final cry of souls threatened with extinction—the “whimper” of Eliot’s “hollow men”—and submitted that even the

unconscious melancholy of today's marketing personalities may yet rise to awareness and rediscover its voice. However, I have offered a clinical portrait that suggests this increase in awareness is not achieved by teaching or other conscious methods, but by uncovering existing desires that oppose the desires of the market. Finally, in conclusion, I wish to emphasize the urgency of the pastoral responsibility to strengthen depression's voice. I have cited authors who argue that late capitalism is turning humans into a new kind of creature. The obligation to care for souls demands that we intervene before this transmutation becomes complete. As Schwartz (2007) has stated: "We know now that 'There Is No Alternative' is false. But I wouldn't take it for granted that our grandchildren will know this too" (p. 51).

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