

Beyond Depression

Christopher Dowrick

- It's like falling down a well, like I'm free-falling.. And I have nowhere to grab onto to stop it.

- I'm up to my knees, the waves are washing over me, I'm treading water, and then I'm drowning

- David Karp, Speaking of Sadness, 1996

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them
cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

- GM Hopkins

- What happens if Hopkins goes to visit his general practitioner?

- Diagnosis of depression
- Prescription for antidepressants
- ? sick note
- ? counselling
- ? other therapies
- ? regular follow-up..

Helpful...

- It's an illness
 - absolved from blame
 - relieved of responsibilities
 - clarity not confusion
- evidence-based interventions
 - antidepressant medication
 - focussed psychological treatments
 - systematic care

So let's do more...

- More diagnosis
 - improve GPs skills
 - screening questionnaires
 - eg Arroll et al 2003
- More systematic care
 - complex packages
 - telephone management
 - nurse management
 - eg Katon, Simon, Rost, Hunkeler

...or should we?

- Diagnostic confusion
- Shaky evidence base for treatments
- Noxious effects

Diagnostic confusion

- Psychiatry
 - Imperialists
 - Casey et al Br J Psych 2001
 - Integrationists
 - Shorter & Tyrer BMJ 2003
 - Fundamentalists
 - Parker Am J Psych 2000

Diagnostic confusion

- Primary care
 - physical illness
 - medically unexplained symptoms
 - Dowrick et al Br J Gen Pract 2004
 - social dimensions

Judith

- I've got this 96 year old aunt and she lives with me, that's a full time job. I was made redundant last July, that doesn't help....
- Generally I'm just cheesed off being at home. I'm totally trapped, just fed up in the house, nothing to do.

Shaky evidence base

- Antidepressants
 - placebo effect ‘variable, substantial and growing’
 - Walsh et al JAMA 2002
 - the Emperor’s new clothes
 - Kirsch et al Prev & Treatment 2002

Shaky evidence base

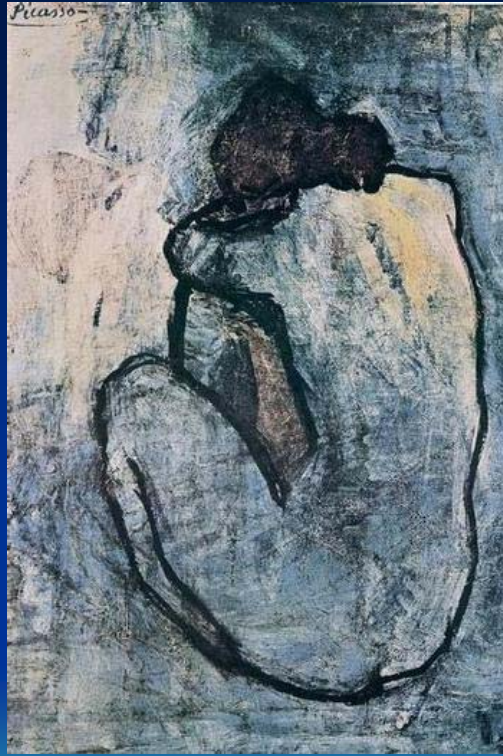
- Psychological therapies
 - apparent systematic benefits
 - similar to antidepressants
 - but mechanism of action?
 - Parker et al Am J Psych 2003

Shaky evidence base

- Training doctors doesn't work
 - eg King et al BMJ 2002, Gask et al Psychol Med 2004
- Complex interventions may
 - but cost
 - and mechanism?
 - Gunn et al !
- Process > content?
 - Gask et al Br J Gen Pract 2003

Noxious effects

- of diagnosis
 - loss of agency, self-determination
 - acting under description
 - Hacking, Social Construction of What?
- of treatment
 - losing the sense of 'being normal'
 - Garfield et al J Mental Health 2003
 - fear of stopping treatment



Drivers to diagnosis

- pharmacological
- psychiatric
- **primary care**
- **population**

Primary care drivers

- Simple treatments
- Professional prowess
- Self-protection
 - avoiding complexity
 - avoiding distress

Avoiding distress

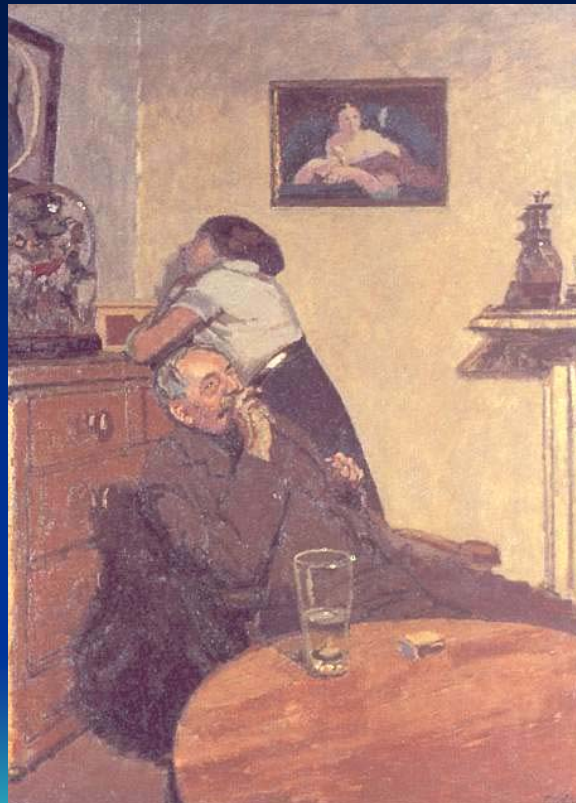
- *..... I just want to feel right and get my life sorted out and change.*
- Change from what?
- *I don't know. I need something to occupy me. I lost my husband four years ago and I just feel now I've got to get on with my life, change it..*

- Do you get depressed?
- .. *whether it's that, stress, depression I don't know.... It could be, I don't know. You see at the moment my shop's me outlet. I call it that because if I didn't have that I'd be in day and night...*

- Is that when things are worse?
- *No Sunday. I hate Sunday. I have to go to town shopping because my shop's shut and I've got nothing so I go to town shopping, buy clothes which I never wear. You just feel good when you do it, and then when you get home you think "what the hell" ...*

Population drivers

- A culture of happiness
 - the specificity of grief
 - distress as deviant behaviour
- Diagnosis as a moral decision
 - Fulford, Moral Theory and Medical Practice



Broadening the mind

- Cross-cultural perspectives
 - 'something bad is happening to me'
 - Wierzbicka, Emotions across languages and cultures
- Freud and Marx
 - suffering as transitional
- Acedia and ennui
 - separation and loss
 - lack of purposeful action
 - Aquinas, Sartre

Towards a social-existential model

- Focus on agency, not illness
- 'Persons leading their lives'
 - desire
 - engagement
 - conversation

Conatus

- The desire by which each thing desires to persevere in its being is nothing other than the actual essence of the thing.
 - Spinoza, *Ethics*

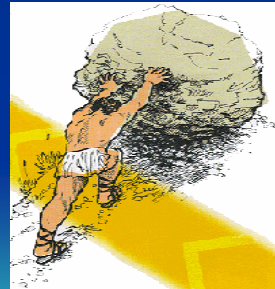
Life of Pi



- I discovered at that moment that I have a fierce will to live.....It is not a question of courage. It's something constitutional, an inability to let go. It may be nothing more than life-hungry stupidity.

The engaged self

- ‘*vita activa*’
- practices and moral communities
 - Macintyre, *After Virtue*
- the affirmation of ordinary life
- Sisyphus and his rock
 - Camus



Webs of interlocution

- I define who I am by defining where I speak from....
 - Taylor, *Sources of the Self*
- Inventing the art of living together
 - Zeldin, *Conversation*

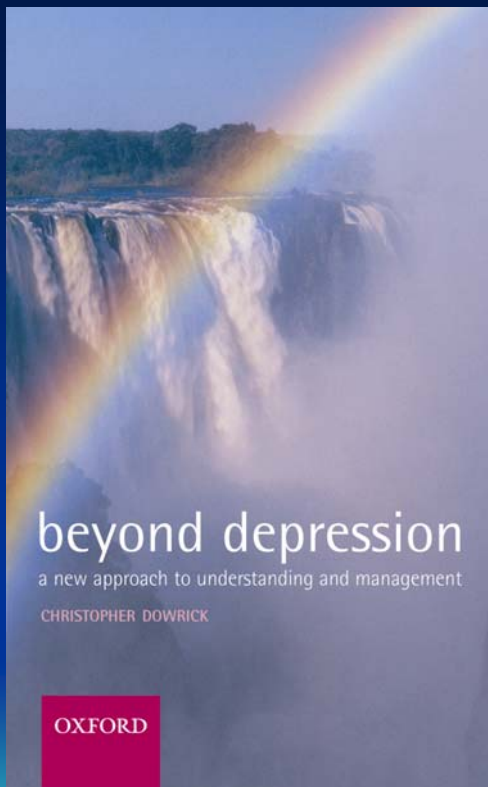
- 'A little more conversation and a little less action please'

- (not) E Presley, 1968



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- ‘Or maybe I should fall in love....’



- ISBN 019 852632 6
- cfid@liv.ac.uk