



The Ethical Treatment of Depression: Autonomy through Psychotherapy (Philosophical Psychopathology)

Paul Biegler

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One in six people worldwide will experience depression over the course of a lifetime. Many who seek relief through the healthcare system are treated with antidepressant medication; in the United States, nearly 170 million prescriptions for antidepressants were written in 2005, resulting in more than \$12 billion in sales. And yet despite the dominance of antidepressants in the marketplace and the consulting room, another treatment for depression has proven equally effective: psychotherapy--in particular, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Antidepressants can lift mood independent of a person's understanding of symptoms or stressors. By contrast, CBT teaches patients skills for dealing with distressing feelings, negative thoughts, and causal stressors. In *The Ethical Treatment of Depression*, Paul Biegler argues that the insights patients gain from the therapeutic process promote autonomy. He shows that depression is a disorder in which autonomy is routinely and extensively undermined and that physicians have a moral obligation to promote the autonomy of depressed patients. He concludes that medical practitioners have an ethical imperative to prescribe psychotherapy--CBT in particular--for depression. To make his case, Biegler draws on a wide philosophical literature relevant to autonomy and the emotions and makes a comprehensive survey of the latest research findings from the psychological sciences. Forcefully argued, densely researched, and engagingly written, the book issues a challenge to physicians who believe their duty of care to depressed patients is discharged by merely writing prescriptions for antidepressants.

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