

Making Sense of Depression in the Media

I chose a „history of ideas“ approach in order to understand how Depression appears in one space of the modern publics, the media. Depression is an ambiguous disease concept used in various contexts (from public to expert cultures), where it is connoted with different meanings.

The problem with this concept is that it is a contingent psychiatric classification, but handled as if that were not so. Depression has become ever more visible in contemporary culture. In the past decade, it has been successfully established on the public agenda as one of the maladies of contemporary Western societies. The question is whether that is justified or not. In this thesis, I use the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) in order to better understand how the disease concept of Depression is constructed in an Austrian quality print media (*Der Standard, Die Presse*) sample from the year 2000 to 2012. In this context, Depression is interpreted to be located at the intersection of Western intellectual history, a growing and heterogeneous field of neuroscientific inquiry and of public imagination. In this area of conflict, the media sample tells a very specific story about Depression.

Western intellectual history is regarded to be all the endeavors, from philosophy to psychiatry, to give name to mental conditions. This also includes the many attempts of psychiatry to reliably classify mental disorders. The neurosciences and other natural sciences, while researching the human brain, think that is not problematic to adopt classifications from medical psychiatry (disease concepts that are only defined around behavioral symptoms) and transfer them to another professional domain.

The chosen media sample shows how Depression appears almost exclusively as a (bio-) medicalized phenomenon, which mostly appears in a psychiatric and neuroscientific expertise setting.