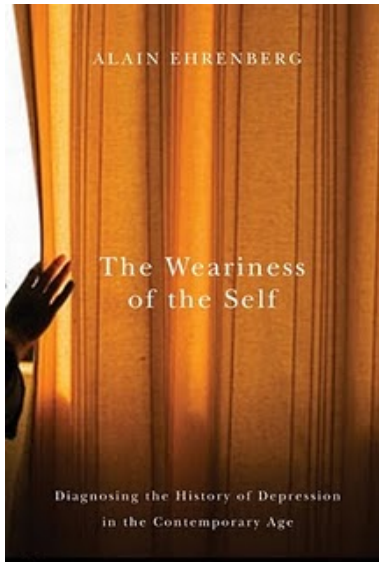


<http://somatosphere.net/2010/01/alain-ehrenbergs-weariness-of-self.html>

Alain Ehrenberg's The Weariness of the Self

2010-01-18 01:04:00

By Todd Meyers



This post is from [Anne M. Lovell](#)

[Alain Ehrenberg](#)'s sociological bestseller, *La Fatigue d'être soi*, is finally out in English, under the title, [The Weariness of the Self: Diagnosing the History of Depression in the Contemporary Age](#), and with a preface by [Allan Young](#).

From the Press:

“Depression, once a subfield of neurosis, has become the most diagnosed mental disorder in the world. Why and how has depression become such a topical illness and what does it tell us about changing

ideas of the individual and society? Alain Ehrenberg investigates the history of depression and depressive symptoms across twentieth-century psychiatry, showing that identifying depression is far more difficult than a simple diagnostic distinction between normal and pathological sadness – the one constant in the history of depression is its changing definition.

Drawing on the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime devoted to the study of the individual in modern democratic society, Ehrenberg shows that the phenomenon of modern depression is not a construction of the pharmaceutical industry but a pathology arising from inadequacy in a social context where success is attributed to, and expected of, the autonomous individual. In so doing, he provides both a novel and convincing description of the illness that clarifies the intertwining relationship between its diagnostic history and changes in social norms and values. The first book to offer both a global sociological view of contemporary depression and a detailed description of psychiatric reasoning and its transformation – from the invention of electroshock therapy to mass consumption of Prozac – *The Weariness of the Self* offers a compelling exploration of depression as social fact”

[Alain Ehrenberg](#) is a sociologist, the director of CESAMES (Research Center on Mental Health, Psychotropics and Society, Paris Descartes University), senior researcher at CNRS, and the author of several books on contemporary individualism.

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AMA citation

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