
Abstract

Why do we think that there are ‘psychological’ problems, and that therapy or medication offers the answer? This book will tell you how it comes to be that we think we have psychological problems, and why it is that ‘needing’ therapy is increasingly the answer. And, if we are to produce a future where we can help ourselves, without helping the business of therapeutics, it outlines some of the ways that we might re-think our selves. The version of human experience promoted by psychology defines twenty-first century western culture. That a way of understanding ourselves unheard of 100 years ago now dominates the ‘helping’ professions and the common sense of everyday conversation, TV talk-shows and magazine problem pages, is remarkable. This book examines how this knowledge of ourselves is produced, packaged and marketed. We demonstrate how the psychological professions sell themselves as the authority of human nature, and on appropriate forms of ‘help’ for personal distress. That is, we show the methods by which psychology — as a self-conscious social, cultural and entrepreneurial project — both defines an ever-increasing range of human experience as needing its expertise, and then markets proprietary solutions to ordinary people, aspiring professionals and other disciplines.

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