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PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHIATRY: AN ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE  
EPISTEMOLOGY OF AFFECTIVE DISORDERS

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**Introduction:** Psychiatric enterprise is inextricably bound to philosophical inquiry. Clinical practice, psychiatric theorizing and mental health policy each inevitably engage philosophical ideas. Despite this, psychiatry still cleaves to its traditional self-conception as a medical subspecialty. The purpose of this poster is to expose the philosophical presuppositions inherent within psychiatry and to highlight the need for philosophical approaches to this branch of medicine.

**Methods:** A literature search was conducted along with a review of Jennifer Radden's canon *The Philosophy of Psychiatry*. The interrelatedness of psychiatry and philosophy was elucidated by analysing and discussing the epistemology of affective disorders.

**Results:** My research reveals that the philosophical literature on depression proceeds along three main paradigms: the moral, the medical, and the social/political. Much of contemporary literature on depressive illness in philosophy centres on the moral and medical approaches to clinical depression. These two paradigms clash, the former being concerned with morality and the latter with therapy. According to proponents of the moral paradigm, depression may be a legitimate manifestation of truths about a sufferer's situation whereas advocates of the medical model propose that depression is merely a medical condition that needs medical attention and treatment. The social/political approach uses melancholia as an analytical category of social and political systems, rather than individuals.

**Discussion:** Philosophical research on a psychiatric illness repeatedly demonstrates that the field is essentially interdisciplinary. The strength of this interdisciplinary work is that many important minds unite to think through the crucial questions that depressive illness poses for humanity.