

Episode 7 – The Roots of Depression

Richard Lloyd Jones: This is Episode 7 of the Healing Through Consciousness series on Thinking with Somebody Else's Head. This time, a clinical look at a modern mental health crisis. I'm Richard Lloyd Jones.

We've been laying a foundation for a more psychological and even spiritual approach to health and healing in our first 6 episodes of this series. That's been important. But Norberto Keppe and Claudia Pacheco's work in psychosomatic healing is not just conceptual. There's a vast history of clinical therapeutic treatment of a wide range of physical and mental health disease conditions at the Integral Psychoanalysis center here in Brazil. From depression – our topic today – to cancer to spiritual crises, this is a very robust treatment methodology with impressive success rates over many years. And we'll dive into an exploration of what's behind depression in this episode, but first, an overview of Keppe's approach to psychoanalysis, with Dr. Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco.

Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco: Maybe, Richard, I should give even some concepts like what our school of psychoanalysis, which is integral psychoanalysis that Dr. Keppe founded. Keppe considers the true reality as beauty, truth and goodness. So everything that was created or is in nature, is by itself, originally good, beautiful, and truthful. But according to his scientific concepts, we are inverted and the true life, the true reality is not what we think. The true reality would be much closer what Walt Disney imagined, or he tried to put in practice. A world of beauty, of love, of romance, like those old movies of Hollywood, presently people might say, oh, they were too fantasy.

Jones: Idealistic.

Pacheco: Idealistic, outside of reality, this is an inexistent world. Keppe would say this is the true world that should exist. And if it's not like this, it's because of human psychopathology. So when we discover our psychopathology better, and when we start stopping destroying beauty, goodness, and truth, the world would become much more connected to this concept of arts, aesthetics.

Jones: So we were closer to this reality you're talking about 50, 60 years ago than we are today. And so we're very alienated from this reality you're talking about ...

Pacheco: You know, what happens, Richard? The more we get disconnected from this true reality, the more depressed we become. We feel like life has no reason. We have this feeling sad for no reason, having no motivation to do anything. So we feel tired, sad, irritable, lazy, unmotivated, and apathetic because the life, the way we have to live has nothing to do with the true essence of life that we were created for.

Jones: And this makes us depressed.

Pacheco: Makes us depressed. So this philosophy of life of consumerism, giving much more value to material things, what you have and not what you are, what you do, what you live for, your ideals, this causes enormous depression. You know, something Jones, you may even be confronted by a war and have no clinical depression, if you have a reason to fight for, if you have an idea to fight for.

Jones: Victor Frankel talked about that, didn't he?

Pacheco: He did. He was in a concentration camp and he wrote a book about the meaning of life, that sometimes even suffering has a meaning. So it's a matter of having a beautiful meaning to live for. And this is engraved in our inner essence, in our lives, in our genes. So if we have an empty superficial, materialistic life, we must be depressed. So this is not even a disease. This is a defense of our psychophysical organism. It's like a cry: you are living a wrong way of life. So more and more people try to cover up depression, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, internet, video games, and more and more pharmaceutical companies make huge profits out of our depression.

So the crazy inverted society, and then they say people are getting depressed. They have this clinical bipolar manifestation, so you have even to prevent it, taking pills, taking psychotropic medication, and this causes even worse situation and results. Because when you take these antidepressants, it cuts off even more your connection to your inner life. So consciousness and your sense of ethics and balance in morals fades away. So you do things coming from your unconscious life that you would never do if you were sober. Because sometimes feeling sad is very important. It's necessary. It's healthy. Feeling guilty is important. If we do something to destroy our lives or the lives of other people, if we destroy a friendship, if I destroy nature, if I destroy something good that I got from my parents, from my teachers, from anyone, if I destroy that, if I attack, if I'm aggressive, I must feel guilty because it's a destruction of richness in my life. So I must feel guilty.

Jones: Yeah. You know, when I first came to Brazil, I was very struck by this idea of guilt feelings because, you know, in our North American culture, we're encouraged not to feel guilt. You need to forgive yourself for everything.

Pacheco: And you know, Jones that the feelings of guilt are one of these symptoms that they call clinical depression. So they ask people, do you feel guilty, or do you have strong feelings of guilt, nervousness, helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, anxiety, these are all symptoms that like a fever in the body are showing that something is going wrong in the way you are living your life. And if you cover up fever without knowing the cause and treating the cause, you can die. So this is the same thing. If you cover up these feelings with anti-depressant pills, you can commit suicide very easily.

Jones: And people say, I don't know where it came from. He seemed like such a normal, nice person because we're covering up these feelings, right?

Pacheco: And they say that nowadays, these kinds of symptoms can appear in lower and lower ages. Why? Because children are led to live lives disconnected from their inner essence. So they are led to stay in front of the computer hours and hours, having their brains destroyed by the computer. And they don't have anything to do. They don't have any connections with the true values and the true feelings. So in terms of psychopathology, the tendency of the schools of psychotherapy and psychiatry, they see all the causes of the symptoms coming from cultural, social, biological sources. Now Keppe created a psychoanalysis that is the first to analyze and to treat psychologically, looking inside our inner life, the causes of our psychological problems. So if we are going to treat depression as a biological disease, we are doing a biological therapy, not a psychotherapy. So depression, it's an inner pain, which is not natural. And we must see what is going wrong, that my nature is giving me a sign, "Oh, oh! You are doing something wrong against your life. Pay attention."

Jones: And what are we doing against our lives when we feel this depression, this anxiety, this desire not to live? What's going on there? What is happening with us?

Pacheco: Jones, Keppe always speaks that man is what he does. We are pure action in our essence. So if we are not living a healthy, useful life, doing something for my good and the good of my fellow man, for society, like inventing important instrument to improve our lives, to heal people's diseases and suffering, to make society richer and more progress, and to improve the quality of life and the beauty of our inner and outer life and society, if you are not living to ideals in a high vibrational level, we feel depressed. And most of us live a totally meaningless life. Like working to make other people richer and richer and more and more people starving and dying and poorer. So just living in a society that is so unjust, so unfair, so alienated, so aggressive, you turn on the radio or the TV, you just see violence. What is the worth of living like this?

Jones: Yeah, we need a big change in a big hurry, actually. Did you have some more statistics you wanted to quote first or more facts you wanted to share?

Pacheco: I have a clinical example of a patient that came to do analysis because of her depression. And in her sessions of analysis, she said she was tired of only helping other people, not helping herself. That she was always benefiting people, her life was all to benefit other people and that in order to be good and to love other people, she should love herself first and do her needs first.

Jones: This is a very common philosophy ...

Pacheco: Very common idea. So as long as she was producing for other people, even though she was angry at this possibility because she was very egoistic, she kept some balance and she was able not to fall into a deep depressive state. She was sort of stressed, et cetera, but then she retired and she decided to live her life for herself and to love herself. And then what happened is that she got into a deep, profound depression,

clinical depression, and she was under severe psychiatric treatment and total isolation. So she was not unhappy before or stressed because she forgot herself in other people's favor. But on the opposite: the only way for her to be fully happy was to continue to keep living a life for the good of others and herself, but being conscious of her egotism, because then if she would become more conscious of this egocentric attitude, she would be able to heal her depression. And that's what happened when she came to do analysis. She was able to get rid of all the drugs she had, and started a new kind of activity.

Jones: So the formula for getting better, moving out of depression, moving out of this disanimated state of life? The formula would be to give for others, to lead a meaningful life

Pacheco: And to become conscious of one's negativity, of one's egotism, self-centeredness, of our envy, of our desire to destroy the goodness of other people in our lives, which is envy in Keppe's terms, our laziness. Uh, so this thought that doing for others is not beneficial for myself. So all these inversions must be conscientized and accepted with tolerance.

Richard Lloyd Jones: Keppe's concept of inversion is really an essential thing to understand when looking at anything in our society today. In individual and collective ways, our inverted approach to everything causes damage. And Dr. Pacheco was alluding in that episode to our inverted approach to reality and how our depression springs from a sense that we're living a useless life. Addressing that in our own lives can lead us to making efforts to correct that and live with more purpose and meaning. And to the degree we can manage that is the degree to which we find real success and accomplishment.

In our next episode. We'll look at a specific case of psychoanalysis, and explore what's behind a lack of accomplishment that one of our podcast listeners is experiencing.