

Multiple anxieties

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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On a [recent episode](#) of Marketplace, after another day of "volatility" in the stock market, host Kai Ryssdal asked New York bureau chief Heidi Moore about that particular day's anxiety, apparently caused by untrue rumors about a French bank. Moore pointed out that "all you really need to destroy even the strongest bank is a rumor." In the same interview, Ryssdal asked what might take us back to the panic of 2008. Moore's answer was essentially the same: rumors and innuendo. We are vulnerable to the realities produced by our own anxieties.

While this seems to me a rather facile economic analysis, it highlights the odd reality that the markets are as much a psychological phenomenon as a tangible one--and that the current state of their being is anxious.

In an [essay](#) in *The American Scholar*, poet Christian Wiman addresses this "hive of nerves." We frequently discuss and devote many hours of our day to the anxiety of daily existence, he writes. This anxiety pervades nearly every aspect of our lives and seems, collectively and individually, to be on the rise.

But Wiman suggests that we might distinguish between this quotidian anxiety and the anxiety of existence itself. We almost never discuss or devote time to the metaphysical and existential dimensions of our worry. What is behind the volatility of the markets? Perhaps it is the unaddressed issue of our very existence on the planet, the unresolved meaning of our being. We are constantly distracted by the uncertainties of our days. And yet, as a society, we have no way to address or approach the fundamental questions of our existence.

What common vocabulary might we find? Wiman doesn't pretend to have answers, and he doesn't imagine that Christianity or religion is an

answer in itself. But he does believe that by looking through the lens of faith we can begin to perceive the outlines of meaning and purpose--and that doing so responds to anxiety, even if it doesn't relieve it altogether.