

Psychology in Medicine

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For Charnwood, Church Row and Cothall,
which provided asylum.

A medical man likes to make psychological observations

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871)

... more than half of practical medicine is psychology ...

John Ryle, *The Natural History of Disease* (1936)

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Preface

In his *Provincial Letters*, Pascal apologized for writing such a long letter, but he didn't have time to write a short one; but brevity in writing is not easy, as the young Ruskin recognized when he wrote to his father 'I would write a short, pithy, laconic, sensible, concentrated, and serious letter if I could . . .'. I was asked to write a short book, and like many before me I thought it would be easier than writing a long one and found that it is not. This book is perhaps still too long, and that is a heinous crime in writing for medical students, for their curriculum is horribly overloaded. Those words they do read have to seem relevant, readable, interesting, and to communicate the excitement and interest of the subject. Whether this book does that it is not for me to say, but it is more likely to do so than in its lengthier first draft.

Although aimed principally at medical students, I hope that this book may also find another target. Many doctors qualified before psychology established itself as an accepted part of the medical curriculum. Some will now wish to discover what psychology is about; maybe out of curiosity or perhaps because while studying some other medical phenomenon they have come across those nebulous 'psychological factors', which are so frequently invoked as explanation, and accompanied by much arm-waving — and they wish to know what psychology has to offer. I hope that this small book will provide a quick answer to their questions.

In carrying out any task we all have role-models. The *cognoscenti* of textbook style might be interested to know that I have tried, although certainly with less success, to write a book that combines features from the best three textbooks that I know: McKeown and Lowe's *Textbook of Social Medicine*, Roitt's *Essential Immunology*, and Cavalli-Sforza and Bodmer's *The Genetics of Human Populations*. They showed me that textbooks can be well-written, well-illustrated, present ideas as well as facts, and be enjoyable.

The original idea for this book came from Peter Richards, and his patience and commitment have been supported by Richard Barling and then Susan Devlin from Butterworth-Heinemann; I hope it was worth waiting for. Needless to say the book started out as a series of lecture notes, which have been developed, polished and refined; my thanks to a decade of students at St Mary's on whom I have honed the material presented here. The book could not have been written without those who provided a place of refuge from the London bustle; my grateful thanks to my parents, to David and Wilhemina Lockwood, and to Geraldine McNeill all of whom kept me fed, watered and warm while I spent the days writing. The final stages of the book could not

have been completed without Jack Van Horn's enthusiasm and commitment. Finally, as always, my thanks to Diana Lockwood for providing support throughout the project.

Chris McMan
London, 1991