



Authors of our own misfortune?: The problems with psychogenic explanations for physical illnesses

Angela Kennedy

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Since the advent of "medicine" as a discrete practice, beliefs that bodily illness can somehow be caused by psychological, emotional, and behavioural "disorder" have been claimed by many in the discipline. Such beliefs became less creditable as scientific methods of detecting disease developed, with discoveries such as the physiological and anatomical abnormalities in Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis, for example, and the organisms causing syphilis and duodenal ulcers. Nevertheless, psychogenic explanations for illnesses still appear frequently within medical and academic literature, in "common sense" public discourses, and in medical diagnoses of patients. But how plausible are these explanations? *Authors of our Own Misfortune?* proposes that psychogenic explanations for physical illnesses are subject to a complex mix of confusing concepts, accompanied by certain moralistic and ideological assumptions about people and their illnesses. Most crucially, such explanations are also, almost always, fatally flawed, both scientifically and logically. Furthermore, the widespread, uncritical acceptance and use of such explanations has had serious and specific adverse effects on the people upon whom they are used. This is a timely, groundbreaking book about a critical theme in medicine. It provides rigorous analysis of the claims made about "mental disorder" and bodily illness, using current "medical controversies" (such as, but not limited to, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) to demonstrate the problems with and adverse effects of such claims. *Authors of our Own Misfortune?* is essential reading for academics, health professionals, and those directly or indirectly affected by psychogenic explanations for illness.

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