



Centre for
Medical
Humanities

Medicine for the mind

Dr. Neil Pickering, University of Otago
CMH Visiting Fellow Michaelmas 2011

Wednesday 16th November 2011
5.15pm St. Chad's College

Followed by an opportunity for
further discussion over wine
and canapés.

How should we understand mental illness? The question is fundamental and puzzling. An example brings this out: In the winter of 1826-27, the young John Stuart Mill fell into a state of depression, and on several occasions wondered whether he had any obligation to live on. His experiences probably meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Major Depressive Episode. But Mill's account in his autobiography is not univocal. He is inclined to talk of the experience as a cloud - something (a disease?) visited upon him from outside. Famously, he believed reading Wordsworth lifted this cloud from him for ever - Wordsworth's poems were, says Mill, 'a medicine for my state of mind'. At the same time, Mill says it was a crisis in his 'mental life': it was a time at which his most fundamental beliefs were challenged, and found wanting - it was an intellectual not a medical crisis. In this seminar I am to bring out what light my research in Durham has thrown on such cases.

To book please contact Polly De Giorgi at polly.degiorgi@durham.ac.uk or 0191 3347008.
Further information on the Centre for Medical Humanities and our events can be found at our
Website <http://www.dur.ac.uk/cmh/> and our Blog <http://medicalhumanities.wordpress.com/>