

## **'A Piece of My Mind: A Psychiatrist on the Couch'**

**By Professor Gordon Parker, University of NSW and Black Dog Institute**

Gordon Parker is known for having strong views – particularly about the classification and management of mood disorders – and such views tend to generate polarised responses. In *'Inside Madness'* the author Melissa Sweet described Parker as sometimes “charming, witty and erudite,” sometimes arrogant and intimidating, and “variously regarded with fear, loathing, admiration and respect”.

In this autobiography Gordon Parker seeks to describe what brought him into a career in Psychiatry and what he then brought to Psychiatry. He writes in two voices. The first section whimsically and self-disclosively describes his personal development and lack of academic success through school and the medical course. Along the way, he details a number of creative extra-curricular activities, arguing that there are few wasted efforts and that, like Sisyphus, he was merely developing his muscles, before falling into a career that could not have been predicted.

In the second section of the book he writes in a more didactic way seeking to detail his concerns about the current classification and management of mood disorders, and to take the medical reader into the historical circumstances that have generated a number of flawed and limited psychiatric models. In later chapters he seeks to define the positives within a career in Psychiatry. In seeking to define what is 'good psychiatry,' he extrapolates from the literature relevant to medicine as a whole, focusing on *phronesis* or 'practical reasoning'. He then melds this topic with his own personal experience of 'pattern recognition' and 'neurogenesis' – arguing that the actual practice of clinic medicine ideally constantly sharpens clinical reasoning skills. This is a book of relevance to all health practitioners.