



The Nature of Healing: The Modern Practice of Medicine

Eric J. Cassell

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Currently and for centuries past, sickness has been understood to be primarily the physical result of bodily disease. Yet this definition of illness is out-of-date and untrue to life at a time when chronic illness and the problems of disability and aging are increasingly common. When persons are sick, it pervades their whole being. *The Nature of Healing* is based on a different definition of sickness, one that recognizes persons as sick when they cannot achieve their goals and purposes because of impairments of function, ranging from the molecular to the spiritual, which they believe to fall under the scope of medicine. Such impairments may result from disease, but certainly not all.

As the sick person has increasingly become the focus of medicine, there have been repeated but mostly failed attempts to achieve both technological and humanistic goals in caring for patients. This approach is flawed because there is only one ultimate goal -- the well-being of the patient. Whether it involves the personal action of the clinician or the use of technology, everything done toward the goal of well-being is part of the healing enterprise. In this book, Eric Cassell explores what sickness is, what persons are, and how to understand function and its impairments. He explains healing skills and actions, as well as the nature of healing for sick and suffering patients. This book concludes with a discussion of the moral basis of the relationship between patient and healer, as well as the goals of healing.



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