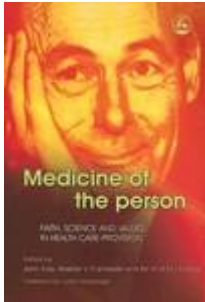


Whole Person Health Care: Medicine of the Person

A review of



Medicine of the Person: Faith, Science and Values in Health Care Provision

by John Cox, Alastair V. Campbell, and Bill (K.W.M.) Fulford (Eds.)

London: Jessica Kingsley, 2007. 239 pp. ISBN 978-1-84310-397-4. \$34.95, paperback

Reviewed by

[Ilene A. Serlin](#)

The timing of the book *Medicine of the Person: Faith, Science and Values in Health Care Provision* is perfect. Health care professionals are beginning to look at the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the role of values in healing, and books are appearing that expand the notion of health care (Goleman & Gurin, 1993; Gordon, 1996; Micozzi, 2007; Rakel & Faass, 2006; Schlitz, Amorok, & Micozzi, 2005; Serlin, in press; Zausner, 2006). In *Medicine of the Person*, the contributors lay out a cogent critique of a mechanistic health care system, one that uses robots and computerized diagnoses and treatments but leaves out the human dimension and mysteries of healing.

What editors Cox, Campbell, and Fulford offer instead is a clear statement of values. Not only are these values humane, but they are also written in a language that is elegant, European, and philosophical. What a pleasure to revel in ideas and intelligent writing, after

professional writing that uses PowerPoint, bullet points, and talking points and is written for a hyperactive attention span.

In addition, the contributors in *Medicine of the Person* acknowledge the dark, deep, and complex side of human life. In an age of positive psychology and even wellness, the danger of a simplistic application can be seen in the well-known example of “blaming the victim.”

What is needed instead is a balanced, realistic, humane approach to human nature with a coherent philosophy of healing and values that flow from that philosophy. This book does just that. What is its vision, and what are its values?

Paul Tournier

The vision of an integration of science and values is based on the work of the Christian doctor Paul Tournier (1898–1986). Dr. Tournier was a general practitioner who lived in Geneva from 1925 to 1986. He was very familiar with current developments in psychiatry, psychotherapy, and theology, and wrote over 20 books that developed his practice of integrating modern medicine and Christian reflection into an approach called “Médecine de la Personne,” or “Medicine of the Person.” His book *Doctor's Casebook in the Light of the Bible* (1954) asked how patients view their illness, what it means, and what their faith traditions teach them about life, death, and suffering.

Spiritual and psychological meanings are an integral part of Medicine of the Person. Support for the importance of spirituality in health care has been documented (“The Soft Science of Medicine,” 2004; Fulford, 2004). The dimension of values in a multifaith society is not in opposition to evidence-based health care but is an added dimension (Brown, Brown, & Sharma, 2005; Cox, 1996; Tournier, 1957). The ethical aspect of value is consistent with other new forms such as narrative ethics, virtue, and feminist ethics that emphasize individuality, context, and emotional influences on health. Emphasizing healing relationships, Medicine of the Person “places process above outcomes, means above ends” (Chapter 12, p. 185).

The heart of Tournier's vision is that true healing comes about primarily through the relationship between the patient and the doctor. This means that the person of the doctor is involved as a “reflective practitioner” who works in an interdisciplinary way, a way that is also intellectually honest and patient focused, and that recognizes and comes to grips with the unique position of medical practice, balanced as it is between the sciences and the humanities (Chapter 1, p. 20).

Tournier's Christian beliefs were influenced by contemporaries Bonhoeffer (1959), Tillich (1953), and Jung. Specifically, Christian beliefs include friendship, self-knowledge, a word of life, direction, compunction, desires, discernment, and healing (see Chapter 6, p.

86). Although Medicine of the Person is grounded in Christian belief, it nevertheless has direct application to all faiths, and many of the articles in this book pick up a different application of Medicine of the Person (Radden, 2006). For example, similar perspectives from Judaism include an emphasis on action rather than faith or ideology, an I–Thou relationship between doctor and patient (see Chapter 7), and an interdependent relation between the patient and his or her community. An Islamic perspective raises important philosophical questions about the role of the individual versus the family, and a Hindu perspective on the person opposes a Western view of a unified self (Bhugra, 1996). Common among all these cultures, however, is a value of individualized, person-centered care and the importance of working in teams.

Objectives of a Medicine of the Person are as follows:

to help patients find the meaning of their sickness and their life; to deal with the problem of death; to discover a specific ethical approach to their environment; to open sources of love for themselves and for their fellow-men; to sense the meaning of suffering... to find strength through the community for a new responsibility toward themselves and their fellow-men. (Harnik, 1973, p. 14)


Personalized medicine builds on this worldview to consider six key levels of health care (Fierz, 2004):

1. the disease;
2. the environment;
3. the genes, which means the molecular traits and mechanisms underlying the individual characteristics of patient and germs;
4. the medication—pharmacogenomic studies will develop therapeutic agents targeted to specific, genetically identifiable subgroups of populations;
5. the health care process, including genetic counseling, the education of the patient and of his or her risk profile, a shared decision, and the monitoring of the treatment, and so forth;
6. information management, both patient specific and evidence based.

As Tournier got older, his other books raised issues of the human condition and existential concerns that are deeply connected to health. These books include *Escape From Loneliness* (1962) and *Creative Suffering* (1982).

Although Paul Tournier is not well known in the United States, his *Medicine of the Person*, as discussed in this book, is a thoughtful and welcome addition to the growing literature on integrative health care.

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