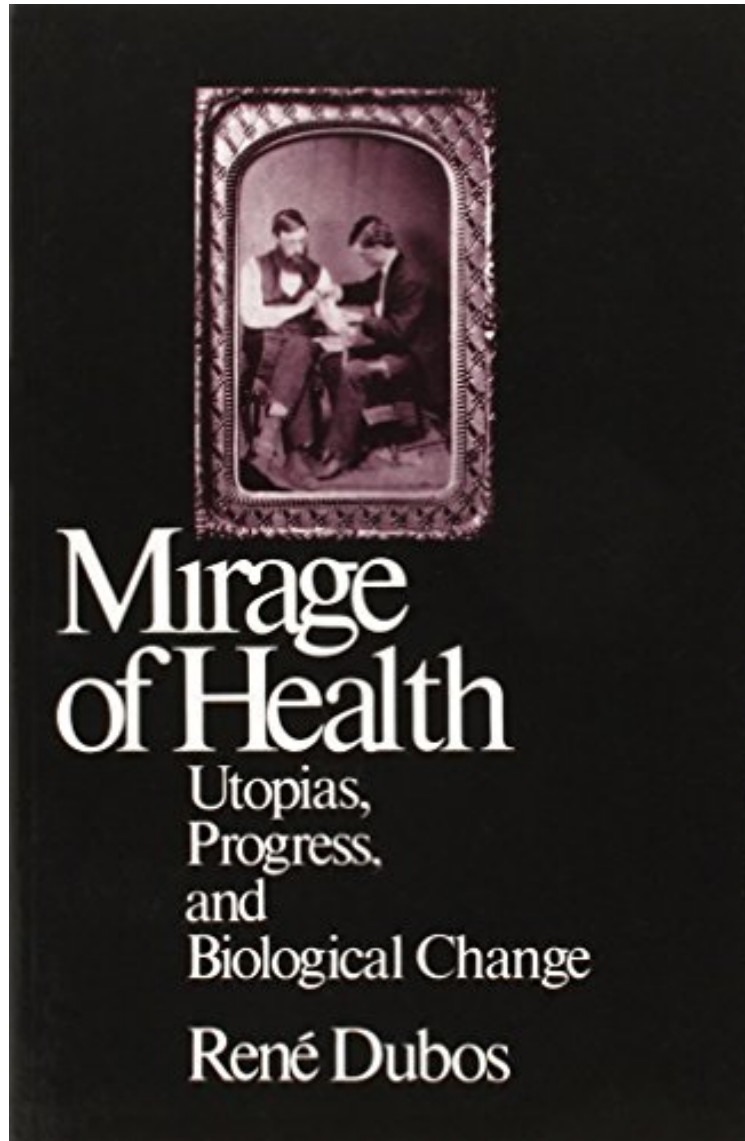


(Ebook pdf) Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change

Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change

Rene Dubos

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Rene Dubos : Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Information Packed Yet Very Engaging By Matthew Theisen I wish I knew of more books like Mirage of Health. Written by a scientist--Dubos was a Harvard-trained Microbiologist--it is not by any means an academic work. It doesn't make use of footnotes or even a bibliography. We

are left to trust in Dubos' authority as scientist and author which I had no problem doing. Despite being written in 1959, the book is surprisingly fresh and almost timeless. This is mostly because Dubos writes primarily about events and trends that occurred in the decades and centuries before it was written and doesn't spend a long time focusing on the contemporary state of medical science. One interesting exception to this is when Dubos mentions that cancer's cause-- which is now known to be genetic mutation--was unknown at the time of writing. Dubos makes it clear that the doctrine of specific etiology (that is the notion that all medical problems can be traced to a certain, physical cause) has contributed more to medicine in the last century than probably any other idea. Yet Dubos also stresses the limitations of this mindset. He emphasizes that with physical ailments, there are many causes at work and it is difficult or impossible to determine the most significant among these. By emphasizing the multitude of factors that determine our health, Dubos makes it clear that balance with our environment is of utmost importance to maintenance of health. Dubos illustrates this point historically in a most vivid fashion. In the presence of a new pathogen, for example, a population can be decimated. Dubos uses the example of the introduction of smallpox to America as an example of such devastation. Another way that Dubos illustrates humans' relationship with their environment is the story of a Zulu tribe in Africa. Traditionally, this tribe had grown millet as a staple. The British introduced corn which was easier to cultivate. However, unbeknownst to either group, corn lacked some key nutritional particles which millet had provided. As a result of the widespread adoption of corn, the tribe was left much more disease-prone. One way that Dubos humbles the physician's profession is his use of historical disease rates for tuberculosis, typhus, scarlet fever and other infectious episodes. These infections subsided before effective treatments were known or used. Rather, these diseases were controlled through social efforts at providing populations with 'clean air, clean water, clean food'. Not driven by any scientific ideology (the germ theory hadn't been widely accepted), the social reformers of England and France in the mid- and late-nineteenth-century were nonetheless successful at reducing infection and death from many infectious diseases. *Mirage of Health* is a book of incredible balance, written with a scientist's mind and a philosopher's pen. It is a refreshingly lyrical and engaging vehicle for scientific ideas. I hadn't been exposed to microbiology in such an interesting way prior to reading this book and if I'd read this book earlier perhaps I would've enrolled in microbiology courses as a college student. For those who already know what Dubos is trying to tell us, the book might not hold the same charm, but for anyone interested in microbiology, epidemics and the social history of disease, this book is a treasure. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Really insightful. A must read for any Public Health ...By Vinton Really insightful. A must read for any Public Health student, and a highly encouraged read for all people who care about health and societal well-being. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A classic, necessary read By Will Taylor A classic, necessary read for all health professionals folks interacting with such.- Will Taylor, MD family physician/homeopath

'Complete freedom from disease and from struggle is almost incompatible with the process of living, ' Rene Dubos asserted in this classic essay on ecology and health. All the accomplishments of science and technology, he argued, will not bring the utopian dream of universal well-being, because they ignore the dynamic process of adaptation to a constantly changing environment that every living organism must face.

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