

The Unity of Mistakes: A Phenomenological Interpretation of Medical Work

Marianne A. Paget

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Marianne A. Paget : The Unity of Mistakes: A Phenomenological Interpretation of Medical Work before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unity of Mistakes: A Phenomenological Interpretation of Medical Work:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting book about the practice of medicineBy beaverkeeperVery interesting description of the process of medical diagnosis and intervention - the full truth of a medical condition is seldom knowable at the outset and reveals itself in the response to various procedures and interventions - but Paget says it much more eloquently, and quotes physicians reflecting on their processes. Particularly poignant as the author dies not too long after writing the book - as a result of a cancer not diagnosed early enough - but unknown to her at the time of the writing.4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Clinical mistakes are inevitableBy observerI give this book three stars for the conclusion that mistakes in clinical practice are inevitable. Otherwise, I expected more from this monograph.The author discusses rather philosophical aspects of clinical mistakes, without attempting some sort of classification. Some examples given I personally would not considered a mistake, but rather an unfavorable statistical play. For instance, if the clinical dat and tests point to a diagnosis with high probability but at the end the diagnosis is wrong, this is not a mistake in its pure sense. In clinical practice you seldom make a choice between the risk and no risk, but rather between different risks, and this idea has been around for a long time.I expected this book to focus on actual mistakes, such as administering a wrong drug,

operating on the wrong site or misinterpreting the clinical information, discussing systems and ways of preventing this and their limitations. Instead, there is a lot of musing on emotions and sorrow and excerpts from interviews with doctors. In short, this is not the book I would recommend as a study of mistakes in clinical practice.

Long considered a classic on the nature of medical mistakes, Marianne Paget's *The Unity of Mistakes* is now available to a new generation of readers. Paget - who herself died of a medical error - argued that mistakes are an intrinsic part of the clinical process. Encompassing a much wider range of error than the terms malpractice, incompetence, or negligence denote, *The Unity of Mistakes* takes an existential view of medical work in which things go wrong as a matter of course, and probes what Paget called the complex sorrow that can result when things do go wrong.

"Paget's analysis displays her strong talent in uncovering the subtle qualities of the physician's experience of medical mistakes, her sensitivity in responding to those subtleties on a linguistic level, and her conceptual skill in constructing new terms to reflect them." -Ronald Silvers, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education "Goes well beyond other work on mistakes...Paget's work illustrates very well the relationship between the characteristics of work and its social organization." -Gail Henderson, Contemporary Sociology "[A] radical, thoughtful, and provocative analysis of a painful area of clinical work...For those who spend their time on the highwire of practice, Paget provides a framework for confronting and comprehending personal failures, and still leaves room to forgive and go on practicing." -Richard J. Baron, Bioethics Books "[Paget's] analyses... are acute. She crystallizes the temporal and moral ambiguities of actions that become wrong as they develop, of understandable choices and irreparable harms, of knowing too late. She is careful to separate the often muddled concepts of mistake, fault, negligence, and blame." -Susan S. Mattingly, The New England Journal of Medicine "The Unity of Mistakes demonstrates how difficult and common serious mistakes are for physicians, how hard each physician works to avoid mistakes, and yet how limited individual effort is." -Atul Gawande, Assistant Professor of Surgery, Harvard Medical School, and author of *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* "The Unity of Mistakes explores one of the most significant issues in clinical medicine It does so with considerable originality, and with great sensitivity to the realities of actual clinical work.... This is a substantial contribution to the sociological literature on medicine." -Richard M. Zaner, Vanderbilt University From the Publisher The classic investigation of medical errors From the Inside Flap "The Unity of Mistakes explores one of the most significant issues in clinical medicine It does so with considerable originality, and with great sensitivity to the realities of actual clinical work.... This is a substantial contribution to the sociological literature on medicine." Richard M. Zaner, Vanderbilt University "The Unity of Mistakes demonstrates how difficult and common serious mistakes are for physicians, how hard each physician works to avoid mistakes, and yet how limited individual effort is." Atul Gawande, Assistant Professor of Surgery, Harvard Medical School, and author of *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* "[Paget's] analyses... are acute. She crystallizes the temporal and moral ambiguities of actions that become wrong as they develop, of understandable choices and irreparable harms, of knowing too late. She is careful to separate the often muddled concepts of mistake, fault, negligence, and blame." Susan S. Mattingly, The New England Journal of Medicine "[A] radical, thoughtful, and provocative analysis of a painful area of clinical work...For those who spend their time on the highwire of practice, Paget provides a framework for confronting and comprehending personal failures, and still leaves room to forgive and go on practicing." Richard J. Baron, Bioethics Books "Goes well beyond other work on mistakes...Paget's work illustrates very well the relationship between the characteristics of work and its social organization." Gail Henderson, Contemporary Sociology "Paget's analysis displays her strong talent in uncovering the subtle qualities of the physicians experience of medical mistakes, her sensitivity in responding to those subtleties on a linguistic level, and her conceptual skill in constructing new terms to reflect them." Ronald Silvers, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education