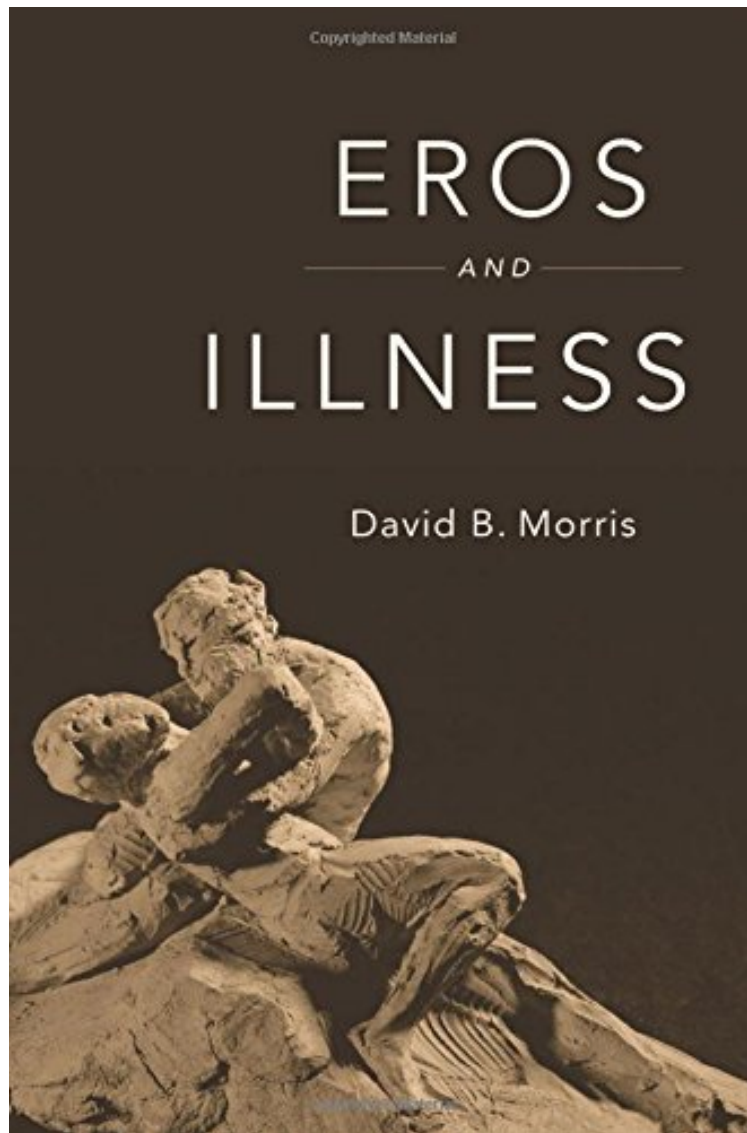


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Eros and Illness

David B. Morris

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David B. Morris : Eros and Illness before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eros and Illness:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. excellent and movingBy CustomerDavid Morris has written a scholarly book which is at the same time a gift to the curious reader . Morris , an Emeritus professor of English at the University of Virginia, has a premise that even in the most grievous of times the people involved can experience sorrow but also desire , passion, and creativity all of which he defines as EROS. His book is his integration of history,

mythology, art, and classic and modern literature to support his thesis. His breadth of knowledge is enormous. He also includes many examples from the medical world where he distinguishes between Eros and medical logos: the feelings in a medical situation and the dry logical words. The idea for the book seems to have grown out of a personal tragedy for the author whose beloved wife Ruth developed early Alzheimers disease ultimately losing her sense of self and succumbing to the disease. For a time as her primary care taker and her grieving husband Morris felt unable to write. The very existence of this book supports Morris thesis .The book was a slow read for me but well worth the time with its density of ideas and facts. This book would be a great book accompanying and enhancing a college course but again that should not put the reader who is interested in learning and truly getting more out of the reading time than a beach read .I guess i would say the reader group who might get the most out of the book would be the college level reader. I also thought that this book could be used a a source book for the reader not involved in a course ;ie, reading the sections on Modigliani or on the Black Swan events among other discreet topics.I was deeply moved by the ideas and stories about feelings in medicine. I also felt that the personal stories of Ruths illness and Davids experiences during her illness were deeply moving. Morris has a tendency to tell the reader a gripping personal story and then connect it to a scholarly idea . I learned from this but felt a longing for more of the personal tale. For example he describes the signs and symptoms that in retrospect made it clear that Ruth had a neurologic illness . He and the doctors fail to recognize because it is a Black Swan event which he goes on to explain in great detail. So as reader I learned about Black Swan events and at the same time wanted more of Ruth and Davids story.Morris does not limit himself to Ruths story but in supporting his idea that even during illness there can be Eros he writes the stories of a gay doctor who must suppress his feelings regarding a flamboyant trans man dying of AIDS, about a female gay couple who find new Eros and intimacy in writing about their experience while one is dying of breast cancer among other stories.Morris section on modern writers reads quickly and again provided feelings filled stories (Eros).He includes references to the writings of those who are ill or deal with the ill such as Audrey Lourde , Anatole Broyard (who had some sort of ecstasy.. Eros.. during his painful and short illness with prostate cancer), Susan Sontag, William Styron among others. Morris pick of anecdotes about these people made me want to go and get their books and read the primary reporting of their stories.This is not an easy book to digest but it is a worthy book. And i would recommend it to professors in medicine,philosophy, to complement their courses, writers who write memoir, and again the curious college educated reader. I felt the time i spent on this book was well worth it. I was especially touched by the sections on Morris own experience and the personal stories of others and wish those sections had been longer.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant and ProvocativeBy David BiroAnother brilliant exploration of medicine and culture by David Morris. This time his focus is eros desire in its broadest sense and how it might be productively inserted into the cold, sanitized, rational world of medicine. Clearly sick people need the scientific approach 21st century medicine brings to the table. But as Morris reminds us, that approach doesnt speak to the night side of illness the unruliness, uncertainty, primal forces unleashed when the body betrays us which has more affinity with the domain of eros. Bringing to bear his extensive knowledge of literature and the arts along with his personal experience taking care of his wife suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, Morris shows us that making room for desire in the clinic and hospital can often enhance healing and be transformative for patients as well as providers.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An in-breadth look at life passions in the face of deathBy Julie SandoI learned so much about so many different fields from this book. Morris looks at history, philosophy, art, science and the experiences of individuals suffering from a variety of different diseases to explore how illness affects the various passions and desires of life. I think that anyone in a care-giving role or going through a terminal disease when Western medicine has little more to offer will come away from this read feeling less alone -and very possibly inspired.

Susan Sontag once described illness as the night-side of life. When we or our loved ones fall ill, our world is thrown into darkness and disarray, our routines are interrupted, our deepest beliefs shaken. The modern regime of hyper-logical biomedicine offers little solace when it comes to the effects of ill health on our inner lives. By exploring the role of desire in illness, *Eros and Illness* offers an alternative: an unconventional, deeply human exploration of what it means to live with, and live through, disease. When we face down illness, something beyond biomedicines extremely valuable advances in treatment and prevention is sorely needed. Desire in its many guises plays a crucial part in illness, David Morris shows. Emotions, dreams, and stories even romance and eroticism shape our experiences as patients and as caregivers. Our perception of the world we enter through illness including too often a world of pain is shaped by desire. Writing from his own heartbreaking experience as a caretaker for his wife, Morris relates how desire can worsen or, with care, mitigate the heavy weight of disease. He looks to myths, memoirs, paintings, performances, and narratives to understand how illness is intertwined with the things we value most dearly. Drawing on cultural resources from many centuries and media, *Eros and Illness* reaches out a hand to guide us through the long night of illness, showing us how to find productive desire where we expected only despair and defeat.

Eros and Illness lends authority and vision to the very private experiences of personal pain and illness. As his wife Ruth succumbs to an aggressive early form of dementia, David Morris corrects what he thinks he knows about pain

and suffering with his own anguish. From this personal experience emerges the daring formulation of medical eros. What Morris is trying for is almost impossible, but he pulls it off. He is trying to enter illness carrying its presumed antithesis. He proposes that some valuable things are possible within the experience of serious illness, that one can undergo states of profound quest, of abandon, of all that is not ordinary, constricted life. Only a scholar of Morris's stature who has had to suffer his battering losses would be able to propose such a profound challenge to the world of medicine. (Rita Charon, Columbia University) This remarkable book focuses on the fundamental and fraught relationship of what the author terms medical logos and medical eros. These terms mirror the philosophical relationship of logos to eros, and bear upon how desire and knowledge in the context of illness reshape that relationship. David Morris is not afraid to delve deep into personal experience. His writing is clear, communicative, and filled with sections that are brilliant in conception and execution such as the discussions on Modigliani, light, appearance and disappearance, and assenting to life in death-boundedness. This book is a tour-de-force. (Thomas Dumm, Amherst College) Eros and Illness eloquently illustrates how much medical humanities, narrative medicine, and similar new disciplines can contribute to more effective and compassionate care by reminding clinicians that illness is more than a series of data points. (Suzanne Koven Los Angeles of Books 2017-05-11) About the Author David B. Morris is a writer and Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Virginia.