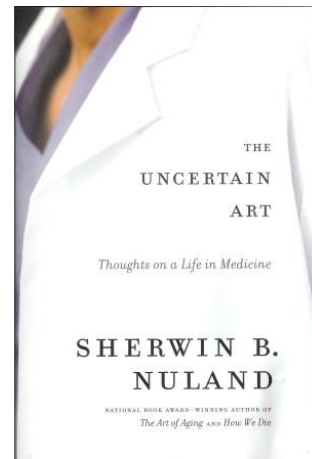


A Review of  
***The Uncertain Art:  
Thoughts on a Life in Medicine***  
Author: Sherwin B. Nuland



This collection of essays by one of my favorite authors is aptly titled: **Thoughts on a Life in Medicine**, and given the long and varied experiences Dr. Nuland has had, this book had to be added to my ever growing collection of his prolific writings. Most of the essays are reprints from his articles over the years 1998 through 2004 originally published in the **American Scholar**. Their subjects are varied and directed to many different audiences, from medical professional colleagues to world leaders, pushing them to look closely at their world of rapid scientific development and its many consequences that the world may not even yet realize no less understand.

From his first hand investigation into the art of acupuncture and its use in place of traditional Western anesthesia in the operating theater to the subject of human cloning and DNA manipulation, the wide range of interests and deep understanding that is the hallmark of this author's books is carried forward in this collection again. But he doesn't limit his thoughtful reflections to just scientific matters as can be seen in thoughts on grief in a chapter on Islamic fundamentalism and again in the final chapter where he shares his own grieving heart over a patient friend who dies waiting for a heart transplant.

Still in other chapters we read his thoughts on such topics as the placebo effect, a long history of grave robbing, weight training by the elderly, electroconvulsive therapy (of which he has extensive personal experience), several classic medical textbooks, two great paintings of surgical teaching by Thomas Eakins, writing, and even his own responding to a call for "a doctor in the house."

While this collection isn't as interesting as his award winning **How We Die** or the more recent **Art of Aging** (both of which I recommend highly), for Nuland fans such as myself, it was worth plowing through those topics of non-interest if for no other reason than to discover that final chapter (which, unlike the other articles, is first published here in this book) where he bares his heart in telling of his patient's failed wait for a heart transplant. Yes, our doctors are human and feel with their hearts, and I for one think that is a very good thing, i.e., "my kind of doctor."

Note: **The Soul of Medicine** is available in hard cover on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

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**Brief bio:**

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with The Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.