



A Passion for Society: How We Think about Human Suffering (California Series in Public Anthropology)

Iain Wilkinson, Arthur Kleinman

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What does human suffering mean for society? And how has this meaning changed from the past to the present? In what ways does “the problem of suffering” serve to inspire us to care for others? How does our response to suffering reveal our moral and social conditions? In this trenchant work, Arthur Kleinman—a renowned figure in medical anthropology—and Iain Wilkinson, an award-winning sociologist, team up to offer some answers to these profound questions.

A Passion for Society investigates the historical development and current state of social science with a focus on how this development has been shaped in response to problems of social suffering. Following a line of criticism offered by key social theorists and cultural commentators who themselves were unhappy with the professionalization of social science, Wilkinson and Kleinman provide a critical commentary on how studies of society have moved from an original concern with social suffering and its amelioration to dispassionate inquiries. The authors demonstrate how social action through caring for others is revitalizing and remaking the discipline of social science, and they examine the potential for achieving greater understanding through a moral commitment to the practice of care for others. In this deeply considered work, Wilkinson and Kleinman argue for an engaged social science that connects critical thought with social action, that seeks to learn through caregiving, and that operates with a commitment to establish and sustain humane forms of society.

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