



Marta Hanson

Knowing Hands: Thinking With the Mind in Hand in Late Imperial Chinese Medicine

Shifting focus from patients' to healers' bodies, this talk focuses on how Chinese physicians instrumentalized their bodies to heal (i.e., body as technology to track time, use needles, massage, etc.) and their hands to think with about the patient's body (i.e., pulse-taking) and to situate their clinical encounter in time (hand-memory techniques). When physicians used their hands to memorize concepts related to clinical practice, calculate with time variables, and carry out ritual gestures intended to reduce risk, improve fortune, and even cure, their hands became extensions of their minds.

"Knowing hands" captures how pre-modern Chinese used their hands to think through things, such as macro-microcosm relationships, and to think with, as in cognitive processing. But also "knowing hands" covers mindful hand-based interventions such as pulse taking, needling, and massage. This talk will thus cover two dimensions of "knowing hands"; namely, 1) hand-memory techniques – how humans use hands to aid their cognitive processing – what we term "epistemic hands" and 2) handy knowledge – what knowledge is grasped corporeally and conceptually with hands and so considered "handy" enough to be embodied, what we term "mindful hands." This lecture will draw from the history of Chinese medicine and divination to cover the spectrum from "knowing hands" to "handy knowledge" using "knowing hands" examples from one Chinese medical text - Zhang Jiebin's 張介賓 Classified Canon (Leijing 類經, 1624) – and late-Ming (1368-1644) daily-use encyclopedias of the same period. These sources provide a full spectrum of how Chinese healers projected their "mind in hand" for

healing, cognitive, and divinatory ends, thereby using their body-as-technology within the clinical encounter.