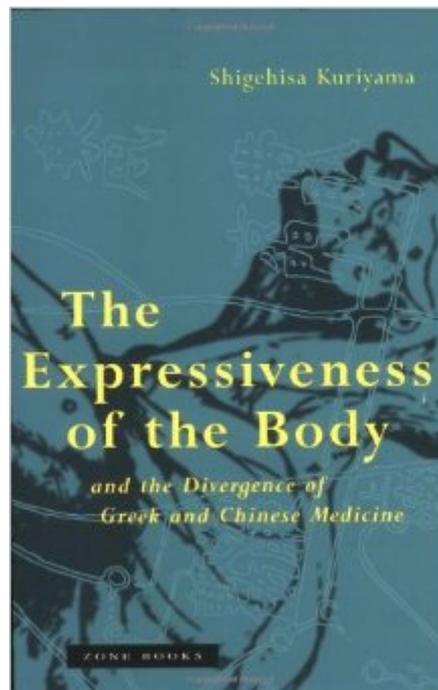


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The Expressiveness Of The Body And The Divergence Of Greek And Chinese Medicine



Synopsis

At the heart of medical history is a deep enigma. The true structure and workings of the human body are, we casually assume, everywhere the same, a universal reality. But then we look into the past, and our sense of reality wavers: accounts of the body in diverse medical traditions often seem to describe mutually alien, almost unrelated worlds. *The Expressiveness of the Body* meditates on the contrasts between the human body described in classical Greek medicine and the body as envisaged by physicians in ancient China. It asks how this most basic of human realities came to be conceived by two sophisticated civilizations in radically diverging ways. And it seeks answers in fresh and unexpected topics, such as the history of tactile knowledge, the relationship between ways of seeing and ways of listening, and the evolution of bloodletting.

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Customer Reviews

The author is to be commended for doing a service, not only to the medical community, but to all who would seek a greater understanding of how perception feeds and shapes knowledge as such. The prose is elegant, and the subject matter selected and laid out judiciously for the purpose of maximum comparison. The author demonstrates, convincingly that if Eastern Medicine seems strange (and it always did) to Western eyes, Western Medicine is no less so in its peculiar assumptions about the body. All fine and good, BUT... The reason I give it four stars is that there is a lacuna in the logic of comparison here. The design of the study intended to do a one-on-one comparison necessarily restricts the theme drastically. What is seriously lacking is a treatment of the

influence on the development of Chinese medicine of Taoist yoga and other esoteric techniques concerning the body, techniques well articulated during the Former Han Dynasty (ca. 200 BCE). The Hellenic Civilization, and the West in general, is distinguished from the East by virtue of its lack of systematic techniques of mind-body control, the likes of which may be found in yoga and the various martial arts of the Chinese variety. It seems reasonable to assume that a martial arts technique has to be grounded in a particular, but thorough understanding of the body. And indeed, much of Chinese martial arts and yoga techniques, and medicine are based on experience of things not within the ken of Western modes of perception -- The notion of the ethereal body and various modes of consciousness, for example. But, alas, so much of what is within Chinese medicine and experience remains unmeasured and perhaps unmeasurable by modern Western medical episteme.

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