

THINKING ABOUT THINKING

& Its Implications for Patient Safety

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EPISTEMOLOGY:

How do we know
what we know?



CLINICAL MEDICINE

SCIENCE?

ART?

PRACTICE!

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*:

EPISTEME

- the intellectual virtue of knowing about “fixed things”: STARS, ROCKS, ATOMS

PHRONESIS

- practical reason, the intellectual virtue of determining what to do in uncertain circumstances: MEDICINE, NAVIGATION, ETHICS

TECHNE

- “know-how”, the intellectual virtue that characterizes craft or art: COOKING, SUTURING, INTUBATION

TWO KINDS OF RATIONALITY

“To say that all human thinking is essentially of two kinds--reasoning on the one hand, and narrative, descriptive, contemplative thinking on the other--is to say only what every reader’s experience will corroborate.” --William James

“If our model of practical reasoning is based on an illegitimate extrapolation from reasoning in natural science, little can meet its criteria, and skepticism about reason itself is the consequence.”

--Charles Taylor
Sources of the Self

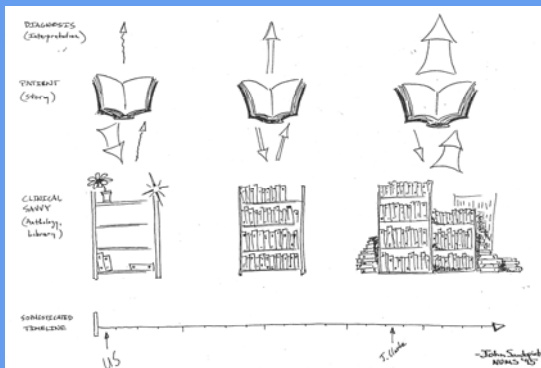
Hermeneutics:

“the science of interpretation...”

**“Talk to me
so we can see
what’s goin’ on...”**

Marvin Gaye

ACQUIRING CLINICAL REASONING



CLINICAL REASONING

GENERALIZATIONS
The case-based store of information
about illness & disease

-Diagnosis-

PARTICULARS
The details of the patient's malady

Charles Bosk

*Forgive and Remember:
Managing Medical Failure*

University of Chicago Press, 1979

HISTORY-TAKING

**“The diagnosis is usually
made from the history.”**

⇕

**“...the patient denies
alcohol use...”**

THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

“Focus!”



“Notice everything!”

DIAGNOSIS

Occam’s Razor



Hickam’s Dictum

The therapeutic imperative:

“Always do everything for every patient forever.”

--Samuel Shem



Above all, do no harm:
“Don’t just do something, stand there!”



Is it possible to un-think them?

**Arthur S. Elstein, Lee S. Shulman,
Sarah A. Sprafka**

***Medical Problem Solving:
An Analysis of Clinical
Reasoning***

Harvard University Press, 1978

Jerome Groopman

How Doctors Think

Houghton Mifflin, 2007

**Jerome P. Kassirer & Richard I.
Kopelman**

Learning Clinical Reasoning

Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1991

THE NATURE OF PRACTICE

**“Practice requires knowledge,
which means that it is obliged
to treat the knowledge available
at the time as complete and
certain.”**

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Donald A. Schön

***Educating the Reflective
Practitioner: Toward a New
Design for Teaching and
Learning in the Professions***

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987

THE NATURE OF PRACTICE

Practice “excludes from the experience any inquiry as to its own conditions of possibility.”

Pierre Bourdieu

**Stuart E. Dreyfus &
Hubert L. Dreyfus**

“From Socrates to Expert Systems” in
Interpretive Social Sciences, ed.
Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987

&

Patricia Benner,
From Novice to Expert
Addison-Wesley, 1984



How Doctors Think

Clinical Judgment
and the Practice of Medicine

KATHRYN MONTGOMERY
