

Jungian Psychotherapy and the Body

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ABSTRACT

The Body is subject to a paradox within Jungian psychotherapy. At times, it is described as an isolated system, with its drives, desires, and workings. At others, it is linked to the mind and viewed as part of the psyche. This alleged ambivalence percolated to the post-Jungians, resulting in the body receiving comparatively little interest in analytical psychology until recently. In a psychology that seeks to understand communications from the unconscious, dismissing the body is a missed opportunity. Jung did use the body and bodily expression in his academic and psychotherapeutic work. He did not write on the subject in depth, however. While his attitudes have a reputation for ambiguity, a consistent theory relating to the mind, body, and their heterogeneity can be discerned from his writings. In this review, this theory will be discussed, along with the Jungian and post-Jungian attitude towards the body. A Jungian contribution to the field of body psychotherapy has the potential to offer new insights, given the expansive subject matter in Jung's collected works.

Keywords: Jung, Analytical Psychology, Mind-Body Problem, Body Psychotherapy

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he body, the physical structure of human beings, is subject to a paradox within Jungian (also called analytical) psychology. At times, it is described as an isolated system, with its drives, desires and workings. At others, it is linked to the mind and viewed as part of the psyche (Samuels *et al.*, 1997, p. 30). It is suggested that Jung, while considering the body in his collected works, did not discuss any clear way to work with the body in psychotherapy (Sassenfeld, 2008). This alleged ambivalence percolated to the post-Jungians, resulting in the body receiving comparatively little interest in analytical psychology until recently. In a psychology that seeks to understand communications from the unconscious, dismissing the body, which has been said to account for 55% of communication (Mehrabian and Ferris, 1967; Mehrabian and Wiener, 1967) is a missed opportunity. In other psychotherapeutic fields, such as dance therapy, the body is used as a mechanism of treatment for mental illness. The mind's link to the body is considered a causative agent in conditions such as psychosomatic disorders and dissociative seizures. The body's importance cannot therefore be ignored. In this review, the body in Jungian psychology will be critically appraised. The literature used for this essay was found initially via the recommended readings on this subject from Jungian academics. This then highlighted relevant areas of Jung's collected works that were subsequently investigated. Post-Jungian writings were found from references in the initial literature and searches in Jungian journals for the keyword "body." Any literature that could not be accessed in its original form, mostly due to books not being available, is cited where it was found in the text of the essay. From this literature search, five themes emerged that could be discussed. The themes are early work, body-mind heterogeneity, situating Jungian concepts within the

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body, the body as a shadow, and working with the body in therapy. Situating Jungian concepts within the body is not of relevance to this review. Regarding each theme, Jung's writing will initially be reviewed, followed by post-Jungian thought where applicable.

A Brief History of the Mind-Body Problem

The mind-body problem, concerning the nature of the relationship between the physical body and the experience of consciousness, has a long history. A brief description of this topic is of relevance, given the subject matter of this review. A paper by Kaylo (2003) details this history and begins in the medieval period, where he alleges the body and soul were inseparable. However, as the Enlightenment period started, the body's separation from the soul began. Descartes applied mathematics to the body, giving mechanical explanations to biological processes while keeping the mind separate and elevated. This split was named Cartesian dualism, derived from the Descartes family name in Latin: Cartesius (Cunning, 2014). In the Western world, dualism would be the accepted way the mind-body connection was explained until the 1900s.

Following Descartes, further studies of anatomy led to locating mental disturbance in the nervous system, and some, such as physician Thomas Willis, suggested that the soul could be situated in the body – in his case, the location being the arteries at the base of the brain that still bear his name today (O'Connor, 2003). This assertion notwithstanding, in general, the soul and consciousness became concentrated in the mind and wholly separate from the body. Mental illness became either a purely physical illness requiring medication, or a behavioral one requiring moral therapy. Moving into the Romantic era, Mesmer, who thought that a “subtle physical fluid” connected all matter, used this physical connection to enact treatment for mental disorders. Mesmer's students and other academics attributed a more psychological (i.e., of the mind) explanation for his cures, and thereby set a precedent for a new psychological treatment of mental disorders (Kaylo, 2003). Mesmer's induced trances contained the “unsolved problem of the relationship between psyche and soma,” according to the physician Charet. Mesmerism progressed into hypnotism, and brought us to the time of Charcot, Freud, and Jung at the turn of the 20th century.

A summary of the mind-body problem in the 1900s (Fodor, 1981) noted that dualism started to fall out of favor after further philosophical analysis of the mind-body problem. The main issue was with dualism's failure to account for causation; i.e., how can the non-physical (mind) give rise to the physical (body)? It is suggested this would violate the physical laws of conservation of energy. As an alternative to this approach, John B. Watson suggested behavior of an organism is an observable response to stimuli. The non-physical mind was re-

moved in this approach, which was termed radical behaviorism. There were difficulties with this approach, not least that it denied the existence of the mind. A subsequent alternative theory, the central state identity theory, equated mental states and events to neurophysiological processes. This brought the mind back into the discussion, but relied on its physical makeup. More recently, in the age of computer science, functionalism was postulated as a solution to the mind-body problem. Here parallels are drawn between the mind/body and software/hardware. In contrast to central state identity theory, the behavior of an individual does not depend on its physical (e.g., neurons) makeup, but rather on the way the physical attributes are organized. Multiple attempts to address the mind-body problem have still not resulted in anything conclusive. The more recent psychological theories have attempted to transgress the border of mind and body. However, it is also important to note the parallels between more modern discussions and the work of, for example, Thomas Willis, who suggested the mind had a physical location. This speaks to the timelessness of this discussion. Returning to Jung, he saw psychology as having something to offer in evolving the mind-body problem. He stated that a psychological explanation “forces us to go forward and overleap that seemingly impassable boundary” between the mind and body (Jung, 1975, para. 622). We will now consider Jung's attempt to transcend this impassable boundary, which must also include an understanding of the body within his work.

Early Work

Early on in his life and work, Jung was aware of the body and its significance. We learn from Jung's account of his early life in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung, 1989) that he was aware of the importance of movement and being aware of bodily sensations. He describes, for example, hating being told how to move in gymnastics. He also details an experience of his heart pounding and diaphragm feeling as though it was made of iron, expanding into his chest. At the start of his professional life, Jung's use of the body is noted in his investigation into unconscious motor phenomena while considering the work of mediums. An example he gives focuses on table-turning, but he remarks that unconscious motor phenomena are also frequently found in “hysterical persons” and that they indicate the presence of a subconscious “independent of the conscious self” (Jung, 1970). Jung also postulated that stereotypic movements of the body that occur in psychosis could have meaning, referring to one case that illustrated the body's ability to communicate a patient's history. In his example, he describes the movements of a patient that were similar to those made when making shoes. After this patient's death, he spoke to a relative at the funeral, and discovered that she had become unwell after a romantic relationship broke down. The significant other in this relationship was a shoemaker (Jung, 1960). Other incorporations of

the body into Jung's work occur in his word association tests described in *CW 2* (Jung, 1973). These were used as experimental proof of unconscious complexes. The tests relied on recording bodily reactions and reaction times to a list of one hundred words put to the test subjects. He concluded that breathing, shown on a pneumograph, was a measure of consciousness, and not useful in discerning unconscious content. The electrical conductivity of the skin, however, measured by a galvanometer, was concluded to be connected to unconscious processes. Galvanometer readings, combined with reaction times, were shown to prove the existence of complexes defined as "the living units of the unconscious" (Jung, 1975, para. 210). In summary, the body in Jung's early work has the place of a communicator of unconscious content.

Body-Mind Heterogeneity

Jung's attitude towards the body in his writings was somewhat ambiguous (Saban, 2010). At times it seems he took an idealist position where the mind was more significant than the body; at others, he appeared influenced by Cartesian dualism and Kant. He also suggested an alternative viewpoint that saw the mind and body as poles on the same continuum. It is this viewpoint that was unique and had the potential to provide new insights into the mind-body problem that we will now discuss.

In describing Jung's alternative concept, the body must first be of equal importance compared to the mind. Within his Zarathustra lectures, Jung (1988) states that there can be "no meaning without the body." He argues this because there can be no meaning without consciousness, and consciousness is a body phenomenon. This raising of the importance of the body leaves it on the same footing as the psyche. Supporting this, in *Specific Problems of Psychotherapy* (1966), Jung states the body is required for the unconscious not to have a destructive effect on the ego. This is because the body "gives bounds to the personality."

Further on in his seminars of Zarathustra (1988) Jung delineates the mind-body connection as one of interdependence. He alleges that the mind-body split is an artificial one made for easier understanding. He describes the mind and body as if they are on opposing poles of the same "living body," in essence, part of a greater whole. The body is a physical or visible expression of the psyche, and the psyche is a psychological expression of the body. Essentially, they are "just the same." Saban (2010) also notes this view in Jung's Tavistock lectures, where he states "body and mind are the two aspects of the living being." We learn from work by Brooke (1991) that Jung considered the idea of a separate body and mind a "most lamentable" situation in modern thought, reiterating the body and mind being part of a whole living body. Saban (2010) goes on to describe Jung's mind and body link as moving away from a post-Cartesian dualistic view, having more in common with "Eastern philosophies, astrology and alchemy."

This polarity is also represented within one of Jung's definitions of an archetype, which he called the psychoid archetype. Fordham (1957) eloquently summarizes Jung's definition as an archetype with two poles, one of instincts and drives (i.e., the physical body) and the other consisting of fantasy (i.e., the mind). Within the psychoid archetype, the mind and body are not split and can interrelate (Durchslag, 2016). An analogy for this would be a spectrum with a psyche ultraviolet pole and an instinctive, corporeal infrared pole (Saban, 2010).

While Jung sees the body and mind on equal footing, he does not necessarily denote them as primordial structures. Saban (2010) quotes Jung, suggesting that the self is ontologically prior to and more fundamental than the body and mind. The self gives rise to both body and mind. As evidence for this, Jung states that an injured body does not heal itself, but that it is "some vital principle" that does so. The body must have something that supplies it with this vital principle; i.e., the self. It is in this account that Jung leans towards idealism.

We are left with the mind and body being "heterogeneous, overlapping fields of the self". This counter-contemporary view has the potential to allow for new ways of thinking about the mind and body. However, this view was not consistently held by Jung in his work. As mentioned, he also describes a more classical and Cartesian dualistic mind and body split. This is noted by both Saban and Brooke (1991), who both express frustration at Jung's failure to articulate his mind-body heterogeneity further. Saban puts this down to Jung's wish to elevate the psyche, thereby elevating psychology, and Jung's reading of Kant.

Furthermore, Jung seemed to have a fear of falling into reductionism in bringing the body on equal footing with the mind. This may have been influenced by his reading of Nietzsche, who alludes to this. Jung was ambivalent to Nietzsche throughout his writings for reasons that could have included his fear of becoming mentally unwell as Nietzsche did. To quote Saban, it was "regrettable" Jung could not read Nietzsche as an ally. Brooke (1991) felt poor clarity, combined with Jung's presumed wish to steer his theory away from a more bodily-based (i.e., sexual) psychoanalysis, prevented the body from being a significant part of analytical psychology in the novel way described above. This lack of clarity on Jung's thought would also make the body a difficult subject to take up in the post-Jungian world, which has mostly been the case.

Perhaps contrary to some writers, I believe Jung's heterogeneous approach to mind and the mind-body problem is clearly defined by him. It is that mind and body are on opposite ends of the same pole, akin to infrared and ultraviolet light. The mind is the body, and the body is the mind. However, it is Jung's consistency in using this model that is lacking, and it is here that frustrations arise. I would agree with Saban that the idea of the self being primordial to the living body suggests an idealist

standpoint. I would suggest this also shows parallels with gnosticism, in which Jung was greatly interested (Hoeller, 2002). It also appears that Jung would, at times, take a dualistic view. The reasons for this deviation from what seems to be his central understanding appear to be personal, as opposed to the actual development of a theory. I do not feel the discussion of the theory in itself has progressed in the post-Jungian world. Work has centered around attempting to define what Jung's stance on the body was, and how it developed. This is understandable, given Jung's changing opinion within his work. However, the papers discussed offer a comprehensive understanding of the different views expressed.

The Body as a Shadow

Work by Greene (2001) suggests Jung made an association between the body and the shadow, i.e., the "thing no one wishes to be" (Samuels *et al.*, 1997, p. 138). He suggests that we do not look at the shadow side of ourselves, trying to cast it off completely. He states that this leaves us as "two-dimensional" beings, and with this loss of shadow, we also lose the body. This is because the body produces things we wish to ignore and cannot be spoken about, e.g., urine and other bodily fluids. He therefore describes the body like the shadow of the ego. While some physical aspects, such as sexual urges, are spoken about more in today's society, Jung's connection between shadow and body still has contemporary relevance. Sassenfeld (2008) moves one step further, suggesting that working with the body "is equivalent" to working with the shadow. He supports this absolute statement by discussing one of Jung's definitions of the shadow as an autonomous phenomenon that is antagonistic to the unconscious, but also linked to the personal unconscious. I found that the direction of this particular argument is hard to follow, as there is no clear link given to the body in his explanation. Furthermore, his assertion is weakened by its all or nothing quality as it allows for no flexibility and accounting for the individuality that is a hallmark of Jungian analysis.

I feel the link between the body and the shadow is a useful one, and it elevates the body's unconscious communications to the level of dreams and other processes. The reality of the body as a shadow falls short of Sassenfeld's absolutist statement that the body is equivalent to the shadow, as this limits the possibilities of its use in other ways.

Jung Working with the Body in Therapy

Despite reports to the contrary, it seems that, while sparse in his disclosure of it, Jung did use the body within his therapeutic work. In *The Transcendent Function* (Jung, 1975, para. 180), he explains that the hands "know how to solve a riddle" even if the mind does not. Jung reaches this conclusion by noting that when his patients draw, paint, or model their dream and fanta-

sy content with their hands, they are often able to work further with and eventually integrate the problem. In the same work, he comments that movement can allow access to unconscious material. He suggests that the therapist record the movements on paper in order that they not be forgotten. Jung also advises that the process of automatic writing can yield useful results. All of these forms of active imagination require the body in order to work. Dance also entered Jung's consulting room. In his *Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung describes how one patient danced her mandala instead of drawing it. We learn from Chodorow (2013) that this occurrence has been independently verified by the (presumed) same patient to another author. Chodorow also informs us that Jung mentions the dancing of mandalas by patients in his seminar on dreams.

Post-Jungian working with the body in therapy has shown little progression since Jung. However, some authors have described its use. Referring to the idea of the body as a shadow, Sassenfeld (2008) discusses the work *Jung and Reich: The Body as Shadow* by Conger, which advises paying particular attention to and verbalizing bodily sensations and repeating spontaneous movements while commenting on the accompanying inner experience. In doing so, aspects of the shadow may be made conscious. Greene (2001) revisits Jung and Conger's work, stating that the body is a "bound energy" that contains a history of one's life and consequently can be a record of our rejected side (i.e., shadow). From her own clinical experience, Greene attests the body can be a "carrier" of the shadow, giving away our rational intentions with its unpredictability and physiological responses. Using the clinical example of patients with eating disorders in her work and that of Woodrow, she describes the alienation of the body and distorted body images as an alienation from the shadow. This can be an explanation of pathology in these disorders. Greene concludes, in line with Woodman, that the "bodily symptom speaks as loudly as the dream image."

Chodorow, a Jungian analyst and dance psychotherapist, discusses the use of the body in analysis (2013). She draws parallels with sand play, and sees dance as a "non-verbal symbolic process" to which the analyst is a witness. The initiation of movement, she suggests, can be by either the analyst or analysand, spontaneous or planned. The subject of the movement can be directed, for example, to further a dream image as a form of active imagination, or without a conscious purpose. She comments that analysands may need workshops or other forms of instruction outside of the analytic hour before using movement in therapy. In the practicalities of incorporating it into a session, Chodorow suggests flexibility, but notes that sometimes a predetermined time frame might need to be agreed. The movement should work in synchrony with the verbal work, and not be a separate entity. A warm-up and stretch are advised, and Chodorow comments that the eyes should be closed to better allow the patient to experience inner sensations

and images. However, this comes with a practical caveat that if movements become grand and expansive, there may be a risk of collisions with furniture and risk of injury. During movement, Chodorow suggests that the unconscious manifests in two ways, through images and bodily sensations. Some may experience more imaginal manifestations, but as they become more experienced with movement and appreciative of their body's communications, Chodorow explains that a balance is struck between the two. Overall, Chodorow sees dance as a way for individuals with "motor imagination" to fully engage in active imagination. The term motor imagination is quoted from Jung as someone who imagines with and about their body. In such an individual, movement is the most immediate way to "give form" to the unconscious.

Conclusion

Jung was aware of the importance of the body as a part of his psychology. From his early work to later descriptions of movement as part of active imagination, the body has a specific place as a communicator of unconscious content in his work. This standpoint is in slight disagreement with the paradox described at the start of this review. Through work by post-Jungians, a heterogeneous living body with the body at one pole and the psyche at the other has been defined. As of yet, it is not clear how this new definition could explain other bodily-presenting psychopathologies, such as psychosomatic conditions or dissociative seizures. The difficulty of understanding how psychological causes can be manifested as presenting physical symptoms remains largely unexplained in analytical psychology.

The body could have a place within analytical psychology, but at present this is in a theoretical understanding only, with the body as communicator being a further way to interpret the workings of the psyche. Chodorow's work seems to counter this conclusion however, but it must be noted that she is also a dance and movement therapist, resulting in her work not being purely Jungian. The current status quo notwithstanding, Jung's mind-body heterogeneity and interrelatedness allows for the physical aspects of traditional body psychother-

apy to be used within the Jungian consulting room. It may be that this is already taking place, but there have been no studies of these kind of practices in Jungian academia. The familiar scientific academic adage of further work being needed holds true in this case. What may be said, based on the work identified in this paper, is that Jungians at least have permission to do so from none other than Jung himself. In a psychotherapeutic world that, like other schools, can be accused of adherence to dogma for its own sake, this is an important factor for the creation of novel ideas.

In keeping with the theme of interrelatedness, this connection of Jung and the body works both ways: perhaps Jungian concepts can now find a place in the body psychotherapist's work. The respective incorporation of these different, but related, ways of approaching treatment may allow new approaches for the individual in therapy. By way of an example, a case study on body psychotherapy for a combat veteran with PTSD notes the myriad of difficulties in therapeutically treating this condition (Whiting, 2013). Analytical psychology has its own understandings of trauma, uniquely using the concept of trauma complexes and archetypes within its therapy (Downing, 2017, chap. 7; Wilson, 2004). In the case example mentioned, the patient uses his body to express himself, enabling him to discuss his trauma and other difficult topics. The concept of a warrior archetype or the Jungian complex creates a similar safe distance that facilitates disclosure and working through. Would a greater safe distance be created if the body could express the autonomous needs of the complex, or understand these needs in an archetypal, less personal way? Would this increase efficacy of treatment, reducing time in therapy, or allowing treatment of more severe cases? This proposition is used by way of illustration, and makes no claims to fully understanding either the case involved or how Jungian ideas could have been incorporated into it. An in-depth discussion of this kind is perhaps an example of the next steps that could be taken on the subject of Jung and body psychotherapy. The exciting potential in this suggested synthesis could go further than the topic of trauma. However, in order to approach this potential new understanding, there is much theoretical and practical work to be done.



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