CLINICAL PRACTICE

Archetypes, Ego States, and Subpersonalities

An Exploration of Diverse Expression Within Somatic Awareness

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ABSTRACT

A combination of somatic and psychodynamic approaches can reveal embodied ego-states, subpersonalities, and archetypal influences communicating through the body-mind. This paper supports the hypothesis that ego-states and other elements of the psyche manifest somatically. Thus, more attention needs to be given to the body as part of the therapeutic dialogue. This can illuminate egoic manifestations occurring with bodywork – for example, Reich's process for loosening character armoring, and Jung's theory of a universal collective unconscious with its archetypal forces manifesting biologically, leading to soul growth and individuation. Fragmented ego states, archetypal forces, and introjected subpersonalities become conscious as messenger molecules and neural networks attempt to communicate and heal the mind-body split. The goal is integration leading to embodied wholeness.

Keywords: Somatics, archetypes, ego-states, mind-body, body-mind

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> ***... psyche is as much a living body as body is living psyche...***

Our somatic selves are teeming with diverse expression and related experience. They mirror the diversity seen in the world around us. At this time in human evolution, we see immense differences in ideologies, feelings, and behaviors. These are evidenced outwardly through our actions, yet more often than not we are unaware of internalized influences prompting specific behaviors. Humanity is faced with treacherous challenges; consider the pandemic and its impact on health and the economy, increasing environmental catastrophes, and the threat of major wars. Our bodies, our emotions, and our minds are holding this knowledge. Attentive care is needed. Despite continued violence against "the other," there is increasing movement toward racial, gender, and cultural diversity. This same integrative movement needs to happen within our body-minds. Who has been rejected? Who hides in a private world of pain? Is there an unseen

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presence within the body consciousness who holds the power for restorative healing and increased life energy?

The rejection of various elements and expressions within the inner realms of the body-mind creates many relational problems – with self and others. Rarely do we see the varieties of life expression hidden in the cellular structures (tissues and organs) and power centers (chakras) within the body consciousness. Instead, we are dominated by an executive ego state that overshadows and controls a variety of life expression. There is much to learn from them, as both psyche and soma are teeming with intelligent awareness. In these transitional times we need all of our human capacity, so increasing this awareness is a relevant endeavor.

For thousands of years our patriarchal religious, philosophical, and academic social systems have blocked this awareness by creating an almost insurmountable chasm between the cognitive mind and body-mind. Religion, philosophy, and science have collaborated to deny the value of deeper unconscious life within the body (Descartes, 1649, 1989; Hanna, 1989, 1979; Mijares et al., 2020; Reich, 1953). Whereas religion has tended to encourage behavior assuring a spot in an afterworld, noting this earth realm to be an illusion or testing ground for a better afterlife, other social structures have also reinforced conformity based on their own ideologies. This occurs through the educational system, the family, and community expectations. There are rules for how to walk, talk, sit, and think. Body knowledge is rarely encouraged. This results in many people failing to note expressive sensations from within the body-mind. We tend to think of matter as something densely solid, and don't recognize that inner energies and presences have the capacity to stream through living flesh, the outer presentation of the body. Consciousness exists whether our egos are aware of it or not.

Ego States

How do we adequately define ego states? Do we fully understand the processes of ego fragmentation resulting from early life trauma? Far too often, the tendency has been to negate anything that differs from a suggested norm. The mental diagnostic system can be seen as a structure that names any deviation from an accepted norm to be diagnosable. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) expands diagnoses (new and old) with each new edition. The 2013 revised edition (DSM 5) included 17 additions. Increasing numbers of people fit into one diagnosis or another. Many clinicians were against the expansion of the DSM 5 for this reason (Frances, 2011). This paradigm often reduces clinicians to mechanical treatment responses using "evidence-based treatments," primarily because insurance payers want prompt clinical changes requiring less time in therapy. Problem-solving skills are great, but they often fail to address the deeper issues seeking healing (Schneider et al., 2020). This is where somatic therapies come in. They enable access to deeper issues and

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subconscious energies hidden in the tissues of the body. Increased awareness, self-knowledge, and healing can result from these therapies.

When questioning ego states, one has to ask what (or who) is lurking behind the depression or anxiety? A gasp, a sigh, or a sudden unplanned movement can suggest unconscious activity. These can occur when one is in a state of rest, when ordinary psychic defenses are down. Is there a specific emotional quality or age to be recognized and named? If spontaneous sounds or movements manifest repeatedly, most likely this would be diagnosed as a tic disorder – for example, Tourette's syndrome. But these uncontrolled expressions could also be attempts to communicate by a fragmented ego state who has found a medium of expression (Mijares, 2009). Diagnosing another human being requires training, as well as innate sensitivity and wisdom. Does the pattern or manifestation appear to be a neurological tic or a dissociated ego state?

When researching dissociative identity disorder (DID) in depth, it is known that a personality can have its own age, gender, and other characteristics when it takes the executive position normally controlled by the primary ego state (Ross, 2005). There are also various levels of dissociation (Mijares, 2012). Human beings are innately clever in finding ways to avoid unpleasant emotions and memories. This capacity intensifies with trauma, as ego fragmentation can occur with early life traumas that disrupt ego identity.

The DSM 5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines DID as "a disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality states or an experience of possession" (p. 292). In that it has been difficult for science to define the origin of mind and related consciousness, it is difficult for many people to accept the concept of more than one identity in a single body, as the human tendency is to cling to a dominant ego state (Varela et al., 1993). In that mind is often confined to brain activity, the ego state is associated with mental activities, rather than embodied ones. Therapy and related healing can deepen when eliciting innate body knowledge.

I observed credible evidence of changing ego states when I was a sexual abuse counselor at a women's resource center treating victims of sexual abuse. Although many clients were victims of rape, the majority of my caseload consisted of adults (primarily women) who had been molested as children (AMAC). One client was associated with an FBI case against her father, who had used her in his pornography business. This began at the tender age of two. When I met her, she was in her mid-30s, and a divorced mother of two young children. Professionally, she was educated as a chiropractor. Despite multiple personality intrusions and all the related difficulties in her life, she had come a long way, considering her capacity for holding changing ego states while managing ordinary life expectations. She regularly attended my weekly AMAC group.

One evening the group was sitting in a process circle. When one of the women asked the DID client why she was all red and perspiring, I looked over and saw that an alarming alteration was taking place. Her body was clearly noting a personality change. She appeared to be unable to talk; her uncontrolled hand and arm movements were that of a young toddler. No one could have faked the redness and obvious perspiration of face and body. A very young child ego state had moved into the executive ego position and was expressing a negative body memory. I asked the group to continue, and put a trusted member in charge as the woman and I left the room. At this point, the ego state was starting to change as we connected, and she was soon able to walk with me. The need was to get her out of the infant ego state and back into a stable personality who could manage self-care, including driving her car home. It took a bit of work, but it was successful. Such stories are not unusual when working with DID. This example represents a more extreme example of a dissociated ego state, where-

as *subpersonalities* are considered to be an average, shared phenomenon.

There are several ways to help clients recognize and listen to these subpersonalities. Subpersonalities can also be considered ego states. The late Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974) developed a process called psychosynthesis. Established for integrating subpersonality states, it conceptualizes them as separate ego states. Assagioli believed these states to be especially related to important roles or relationships, even suggesting that some could be related to previous lifetimes (Sorenson, 2020). Assagioli recognized that integration of learning experiences is considered part of our human development. The work is one of expanding our boundaries and recognizing the archetype of the Self (similar to Jung's theory of individuation). Generally, ego states and subpersonalities have specific personality styles. Psychosynthesis utilizes a variety of therapies for this effort, including bodywork, which is understood to help awaken constituents within consciousness.

During the 1980s, Richard Schwartz developed a way of working with what he called "internal family systems" based on a family systems theory (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020). This work is based on awareness of ego states, with the therapy focused on recognizing them as either firefighters (alarmists), managers (who maintain control), and exiles (personality parts that are deeply hidden in the fabric of the body-mind in order to avoid memories and related pain). A significant element in the therapeutic process is sensing where a subpersonality is located in the body. This entails a receptive experience of learning, arising from the body into the mind. Decades before Schwartz, Wilhelm Reich was opening doors between unconscious embodied emotional memories and recognition of them. Such releases could lead to wholeness and healing.

Reich was one of the first clinicians to name various armored areas in the body. He originally named five such areas that when stimulated evoked unexpressed emotions and related, limiting beliefs (Reich, 1933). Reich developed methods for manipulating these areas to release blocked emotions. For example, the eyes might be restrained due to muscular armoring. One therapy could be to make the eyes as wide as possible, such as in instances of fright. This could elicit a repressed visual memory. In his writings, Reich didn't consider these releases to be related to subpersonalities. Most importantly, he noted that emotional states can be expressed and released from various areas of the body. It was Carl Jung (1875-1961) who recognized that archetypal forces manifested somatically.

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious

Jung was a pioneer in researching the value of psychological constituents motivating consciousness. He believed there were both personal and collective (universal) attributes within the psyche (Jacobe, 1959). Jung defined what he called the "collective unconscious." It was motivated by instinctive primordial, universal mythological presences. He called these unconscious motivating forces "archetypes" (Storr, 1983).

In attempting to define "archetype," Jung defined archetypal energies as "factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images, characterized as archetypal, but in such a way that they can be recognized only from the effects they produce" (Jacobi, 1959, p. 32). Archetypes exist preconsciously. They are psychic structures containing biologically related patterns of behaviors consisting of certain qualities and expressions of being. Jacobi explains that the "archetype did not ever come into existence as a phenomenon of organic life but entered into the picture with life itself" (1959, p. 222). They are related to the instinctive life forces motivating the world's mythological stories and much of what both inspires or terrifies us. Our bodies are teeming with these forces.

Jung's deep explorations into unconscious realms evoked a steady stream of uncontrolled fantasies. He sought to understand these manifestations. He found himself experiencing intense psychic assaults as he entered unconscious realms and the onslaught began, but he stuck by his unswerving conviction that he was following a calling. In his words, he:

> "... stood helpless before an alien world; everything in it seemed difficult and incomprehensible. I was living in a constant state of tension... But there was a demonic strength in me, and from the beginning there was no doubt in my mind that I must find the meaning of what I was experiencing in these fantasies" (pp. 176-177).

Jung instinctively knew he had a task to fulfill. During this period, he used yogic exercises to help subdue the intensity of emotional flooding. In this journey, he personally experienced the powerful forces of the anima, animus, divine child, warriors, demons, and sages – all inherent parts of humanity's consciousness. These powerful forces are also easily accessed in dissociative states, trances, or with psychedelics. But, when seeking deeper healing, grounding the learning somatically is the key to healing and integration.

Holding and Healing

As noted, archetypal energies arise biologically (Stern, 2000) and manifest through somatic consciousness. Therefore, the body needs to be included in the therapeutic dialogue. Trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk recognized the need for the body to be part of the healing process (2015). Although van der Kolk and his team include numerous body therapies, they haven't noted subpersonalities, ego states, or archetypal forces expressing somatically.

Few theorists have considered that when trauma and related dissociation occur, *someone holds* the memory and the pain. Research by other investigators supports the hypothesis that fragmented ego states and archetypal forces become conscious as messenger molecules and neural networks attempt to communicate and heal the mind-body split (Mijares, 1995/2012).

Emotions express through the body. Messenger molecules regularly pass between bodily organs and the brain (Rao & Gershon, 2016; McGraty, 2015). Unseen communications take place on an ongoing basis, and are impacted by the intensity of an emotion. Emotional repression results from psychological dissociation. It can lead to traumatized psychic elements residing in cellular blocks, and *non-integrating neural circuits* within the body. Jung believed in the superiority of *affect* as the bridge for integrating and healing past traumas (Jacobi, 1959; Kluft, 1988; Reich, 1972; Rossi, 1993; Watson, 1971). He noted that "a purely intellectual insight is not enough, because one knows only the words and not the substance of the thing from inside" (in Jacobi, p. 14). In other words, insight and cognitive perception on their own are inadequate healers. Affect and body are intimately related to healing trauma. This also relates to William James's declaration that "all human emotions, or more precisely, the distinct quality of feelings, consists in the perception of somatic, notably visceral, changes" (Papancolaou, 1989, p. 8).

A fragmented ego-state might initiate alarming emotions. The goal is one of learning to *hold* these states in conscious awareness. This is an important therapeutic step. When appropriate, a therapist can present examples of the Taoist practice of *holding* opposing states. The Buddhist understanding that everything is impermanent and therefore change is occurring can also be helpful. The idea of being centered in the midst of change again implies the capacity for holding. This expands the boundaries of self-knowledge. Whenever we experience an emotion, there is an accompanying somatic sensation; if that feeling is associated with the body, then the body is inherently and deeply involved with this healing process.

This paper takes the discussion another level by noting that fragmented ego states, subpersonalities, and archetypal presences are hidden within the fabric of the body-mind (Mijares, 1995/2012). If these entities are ignored, problems can arise. The emotion being expressed may be from a fragmented ego state needing recognition, support, and integration. If the practitioner-therapist has developed awareness and holding capacities, s/he will be more attuned to what is arising within the client.

In his article "Jungian Views of the Body-Mind Relationship" (1974), Michael Fordham elaborates on psychoanalytic concerns with the relationship of psyche and soma. Even though Jung never provided affirming evidence to support his belief, he believed that "some kinds of psychic energy are more related to the body than others, and even to different parts of the body" (Fordham, 1974, p. 169). Therefore, entry into archetypal realms, and the potential of becoming engulfed by archetypes and complexes, are enhanced. The more we engage in alternative processes, especially those that include breath and body, the greater the chance that emotional states may arise that are outside the primary ego identity. Therapists need to be attentive and sensitive to clients' needs, levels of development, and timing. There is great fear over losing one's already fragile identity. This fear is comparable to the fear of death. Jung was well aware of this from his own explorations into unknown realms. This is

where the archetypal hero's journey can be seen. The journey of self-awareness and self-discovery requires passion, as well as the necessary courage. Jung noted:

> "Absorption into the instinctual sphere, therefore, does not and cannot lead to conscious realization and assimilation of instinct, because consciousness struggles in a regular panic against being swallowed up in the primitivity and unconsciousness of sheer instinctuality. This fear is the eternal burden of the hero-myth and the theme of countless taboos. The closer one comes to the instinct-world, the more violent is the urge to shy away from it and to rescue the light of consciousness from the murks of the sultry abyss. Psychologically, however, the archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of [humanity] strives; it is the sea to which all rivers wend their way, the prize which the hero wrests from the fight with the dragon." (Jung, 1960, p. 122)

Jung is referring to the hero/heroine's journey that results in oneness with authenticity of being. This mythological archetypal journey is acknowledged throughout mythology and the world's religions (Campbell, 1974; Jacobi, 1959). "Life presents an ultimatum to all organisms: change as all phenomena in the universe must change, or fall" (Allison, Goethals, Marrinan, Parker, Spyrou, & Stein, 2019, p. 2). This change includes the physical. It also holds the ideal that what we do for ourselves, we also do for others.

Sassenfeld (2008) points out that modern Jungians are beginning to explore the body in Jungian psychotherapy. He notes how Jung himself was aware that the "reciprocal relationship between body and mind provides an alternative to having to regard either body or mind as the primary source of psychological experience" (p. 6). Jung proposed the following concerning the body-mind relationship (1936, p. 114):

> "But the body is, of course, also a concretization, or a function, of that unknown thing which produces the psyche as well as the body; the difference we make between the psyche and the body is artificial. It is done for the sake of a better understanding. In reality, there is nothing but a liv- ing body. That is the fact; and psyche is as much a living body as body is living psyche: it is just the same" (as cited in Sassenfeld, 2008, p. 6).

Sassenfeld (p. 6) also notes how the above relates to "Reich's (1942, 1945 [1933]) idea of a 'functional identity' between psychic and somatic processes and provides a perspective that justifies direct therapeutic work with the body as part of Jungian analysis."

Integrating Qualities

A body therapist does not have to seek out subpersonalities or fragmented ego states when doing bodywork with a client. Professionally, it is good to be aware when this awareness occurs, and especially if there are obvious problems associated with dissociative states. If there is a good connection, most likely any fragmented ego states will find a way to communicate through spontaneous movement or sound.

The majority of clients simply seek relaxation and healing. Most therapists have their own way of working. Overall, it's best that the client's process guides the treatment. This researcher/therapist does not encourage naming parts and personalities (as John or Mary, etc.), as this may impair integrative processes. Instead, I find that naming the *quality* that's manifesting through the ego state or subpersonality encourages the goal of integration and wholeness.

Archetypal forces differ from personality states. In shamanic ceremonies, archetypes may manifest in the form of a bird of prey or an animal. They also represent *qualities*. For example, birds of prey usually see in the dark for great distances. An eagle sees the movement of a small field mouse from a vast distance and targets it. Its archetypal quality is the ability to zero in on truth and gain knowledge. This is why magicians and shamans are often associated with birds of prey (often as owls, hawks, and eagles).

Mantric practices from the Yogic, Buddhist, Taoist, and Sufi traditions represent archetypal qualities. The idea initiating the chanting of a mantra is to evoke its unique energy into the body-mind, leading to spiritual integration. The goal is that healing processes can lead to increasing wholeness. Practices that include the body also help promote unitive consciousness (Blackstone, 2021).

Conclusions

Jungian, Reichian and body therapists benefit by exploring the deeper connection with the somatic intelligence of the body-mind. When the recognition of an ego state or archetypal energy is experienced somatically, a bridge for integration is possible. Reich's exploration of character armoring and Jung's insight into archetypal energies of the collective unconscious can provide a psychotherapeutic format that opens a door to deep embodied transformation. The therapeutic path to individuation, healing, and wholeness widens. Wholeness also includes spiritual recognition, and, as Washburn points out, a complete spiritual transformation is an embodied one (Washburn, 1994:2003). Caring about ourselves and all other lives is spirituality in practice. We are living in increasingly difficult times. The patriarchal paradigm is slowly ending. It represents a dominant ego state that is having a very hard time letting go of its ideals and related power. As we integrate new ways of being and learn to listen to those silenced voices within us, we will find the strength and compassion to recognize, accept, and integrate what has been repressed. When freed from the domination of a controlling ego state, new ways of being can and will emerge.

Traditional psychology has primarily focused on self-limiting problems. It has failed to acknowledge that our lives are stories unfolding. We are heroes and heroines in the making, buffered and formed by a variety of interactions. The psyche travels through the depths of our bodies meeting, becoming entrapped by, and being freed from the inner and outer obstacles blocking the path to the jewel – authenticity of self. Our bodies are engaged in this journey. If we ignore hidden ego states, subpersonalities, and archetypal forces, we fail to grow.

We need to recognize the mythological stories moving through the molecular structures of our bodies. Our blessings and our tragedies embody all the elements of the hero and heroine's journey. We have what we need to move into greater integrity in our relationship with the body-mind. While holding a goal of unitive consciousness, empowered by heroic choices, we can ground our ideals and create a better world for all.

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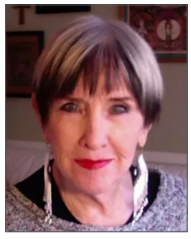

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