

FOREWORD

This special issue of four papers derives, at least indirectly, from the wider consideration of the topics it examines constituted by the 13th Annual International Conference of the Taiwan Association of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies hosted by Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei, 1-2 November 2019, when the theme was “Between Body, Soul, Spirit and Mind: Well-Being, Malady and Remedy from Antiquity to Early Modernity.”

Contemporary (second generation) cognitive science has to a great extent broken down antitheses between mind, body, and world, emphasizing instead the interaction of the brain, the nervous system, the non-neural body, and the external natural and social environments in forming integrated systems of sense-making in which there is no hard and fast division between reason and passion, cognition and affectivity. But we still speak of body and soul (even if only as the two substances that we should like to keep together until dinner time), and body and mind persist as ubiquitous poles of an everyday antithesis. The tendency to think of the body as an object, a possession, or a container is as widespread as the notion that there is another entity bound up with that object or held within the container that gives it vitality, identity, and mentality. As far back as we can go in Western literature (i.e., to Homer), we find notions of a soul that leaves the body on death (and perhaps animates it when alive) and becomes, in some sense, the being that survives in Hades. But those notions clearly go back further—to images of the winged soul as a bird, a butterfly, or a homunculus in Mycenaean funerary art, and further still to the soul-bird of Egyptian iconography or the practice of weighing the body before and after death to establish the weight of the soul.

Already in these few details we begin to get a sense of how difficult it is to sustain dualistic premises. The Homeric *psychê*, associated with breath and a term that is cognate with words meaning “cold,” is originally a metonymy, deriving from the cold breath thought to leave the body on death. Though it departs the body gibbering like a bat and is supposed to lead only a shadowy and insubstantial existence in the afterlife (so that Achilles can try and fail to embrace the *psychê* of Patroclus and Odysseus that of his dead mother in Hades), nonetheless *psychai* in the underworld exhibit a wide range of the physical, mental, and social characteristics of embodied living persons. Homer, it seems,

cannot conceive of any form of survival which does not retain the essential characteristics of the living person as a psychophysical unity (even if the “headline” belief is that the *psychê* in Hades should not do so). Plato, similarly, can draw sharp distinctions (as in the *Phaedo*) between body and soul, but even then the ways in which he has his characters talk about the latter are rooted in physically embodied and socially and environmentally embedded forms of experience. The tripartite soul of the *Republic* and other dialogues is not only spoken of in the same general terms, but also is responsible for emotions and appetites that are firmly rooted in embodied experience. In the *Timaeus*, the parts of the soul are spatially located and physically embodied, even if one of them is immortal. The considered position of Aristotle as presented in the *De anima* is that soul and body may be distinct in definition, but are inextricable as aspects of the living organism. For the Stoics, too, the stuff (*pneuma*, another kind of breath or “spirit”) that makes up the soul is itself material and suffuses not only the body as a whole, but the entire world, just as contemporary theories of distributed cognition insist that thinking, feeling, and other modes of sense-making emerge from networks of connectivity that extend beyond the skull and the skin.

Ancient conceptions such as these, and especially neo-Platonic elaborations of Platonic *Seelenlehre*, inform the dualisms of Christianity and Descartes that have loomed large in the West. But consistently dualistic views are difficult to sustain, and not every society at every period has sought to do so or done so in quite the same ways. These considerations, and in particular the sheer persistence of the body in the mind—even in the mind that seeks to conceive of what it might be like for entities to be disembodied—form some of the threads that tie these four papers together.

In the first, “Good Anger and the Benefits of Dis-ease: Critical Images of the Body in ‘The Parson’s Tale,’” John Lance Griffith uses the language of health, disease, and the body in Chaucer’s tale to trace the influence of earlier pagan and Christian attitudes in examining “the intersection of the physical and the metaphysical dimensions of medieval anger” (3). For the Parson, the body is essentially sick and corrupt; the task is thus not to heal it, because even a healthy body is not necessarily good for the soul, but (on the one hand) to heal psychic maladies such as envy and (on the other) to deploy reason to control body-based passions such as anger, as a way of avoiding both individual and communal dis-ease (*mysese*), a condition that is at once physical and mental.

Thus controlled, however, anger (as in Aristotle and by contrast with the Stoic position familiar from Seneca) may be a positive force. As Griffith emphasizes, the Parson's discussion of sin is influenced by references to the body that are metaphorical as well as literal: not only is envy a disease of the mind that must be cured by the medicine of love, but it is also (by ontological metaphor) an entity that may be "cast out" from its location in the heart (a physical organ deployed in metonymy as a locus of mental life), where it operates on the spirit as venom does on the body, physical and spiritual "poison" running in tandem (Griffith 6).

How the body permeates the ways in which we think and talk about the mind or the spirit is to the fore in Hui-chu Yu's paper on the visions of the seventeenth-century mystic Jane Lead, as documented in the collection of journals called *A Fountain of Gardens*. Making explicit use of the conceptual metaphor theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Yu examines Lead's paradoxical use of highly concrete imagery, both embodied and embedded, and especially imagery drawn from domains of *female* experience, to construct models of the transcendental realm of spirituality. The "self-annihilation" that is required for the human spirit to merge with that of God is figured in terms of the "detachment" (a physical, spatial concept) of the heart (a physical organ) so that it may repose (a disposition of the body) in "a naked nothingness" (a nothingness that is paradoxically spoken of in fundamentally embodied terms; Yu 33). There is both an "outer," physical person, and an "inner" spiritual one, the embodied human being serving as the model for one that ostensibly dispenses with embodiment. The experiences of the disembodied agent similarly draw on the physical and social worlds of quotidian experience, as the life of the spirit is constructed in terms both of natural spaces (such as gardens with pools, fountains, flora, and fauna) and of social institutions such as marriage and the family. The concrete, embodied language of this supposedly incorporeal and transcendental world of the spirit is designed to reinforce the gulf between human and divine, body and soul, but at the same time underlines the primacy of embodied and (socially and environmentally) embedded experience as fundamental to human thought about the mind. Ultimately, however, as Yu concludes: "Instead of polarizing the body and the spirit, Lead envisions a mutually compatible relationship like the one between *yin* and *yang* in Taoism" (34).

In the third paper, “Strategic Madness: Disguise as Motif and Method,” Manfred Malzahn deals with “disguise as a literary motif and as a literary strategy in English writing of the early modern period” (51). This is a strategy that is “as much self-effacing as self-fashioning” (51). These are “two sides of the same coin . . . as opposite poles of a paradoxical dialectic that was at the same time symptomatic and diagnostic” (51). Malzahn focuses on the mind, its construction, presentation, and comprehension, but this is inevitably also a matter of embodied performance, and so his discussion raises important issues of social cognition (how we understand others’ minds through social interaction and observation of behaviour in context), especially in terms of the perils of trusting others and their motives purely on the basis of what one can glean about their conduct and their reputation. Strategies of dissimulation that seek to resist others’ attempts to know, report on, and control us encourage anxieties about our abilities to read others’ motives that can border on paranoia. This exploration of the particular inflections that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English sources give to timeless themes of appearance and reality, being and seeming, raises Bourdieusian and Goffmanesque issues of embodied social practice and interaction ritual: feigned madness is an attempt to game the rituals of social interaction, the protocols and practices of other-understanding, to project an identity in the knowledge that all identity needs to be endorsed by others. Such social performance is as much about the audience as the performer; it involves attempts to control the narratives that are the ultimate basis of both self-presentation and other-understanding.

The final paper, Arup K. Chatterjee’s “Shakespeare and Therapeutizing the ‘Naturall Sicknes’ of Dreams in Reformed England,” deals with an area in which the mind is perhaps left most of all to its own devices, and yet is still thoroughly shaped by the body and its interactions with the natural and social environments. Applying Montague Ullman’s twentieth-century theories of “dream work,” Chatterjee argues for a quasi-therapeutic function for the dreams of Cleopatra (in *Antony and Cleopatra*), Bottom (in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), and Caliban (in *The Tempest*). Dream work processes the “emotional residue” of diurnal experience, and Shakespearian dreams resemble Ullman’s model in (as Chatterjee puts it, quoting Ullman) “‘releasing the dreamer’s own self-healing potential,’ bringing one closer to a more uninhibited and unmasked version of oneself” (95). Unlike other Shakespearian dreams, none of those examined in this discussion is prognostic in nature or function, but equally none

is merely symbolic. Though the three characters in question are not in any sense actually healed, their dreams foreshadow Ullman's notion of dream work in so far as they are revelatory of each's emotional preoccupations.

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