

## The different bodies<sup>1</sup>

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DR. JACQUES MABIT<sup>2</sup>

A key stumbling block in the interaction between Western thought and medicine, on the one hand, and traditional thought and medicine, on the other, is a different conception of the body. Here we will briefly, simply and schematically present the main differences between these divergent conceptions.

### The body or the bodies: therapeutic issue

For Western medicine, there is only one body, the physical body, while various non-Western traditions recognize the existence of different bodies within the same human being. These different bodies are linked and associated, but each has different properties and modes of operation. A pathology can affect one or more bodies, thus requiring adapted and differentiated care.

On the other hand, the traditional healer commits his body (or bodies) to the care of his patients, and his power or therapeutic capacity will be proportional to the degree of purification and potentialization of his different bodies (Mabit J., 1988, 2020). The gestures, sometimes very simple, performed by a traditional healer are only effective according to the "energies" he masters. The same gestures imitated by a third party without personal learning and initiation will have no effect. Without this fundamental data, for a rationalist Westerner attached only to the observation of visible phenomena, this difference in effectiveness remains inexplicable and incomprehensible.

In Western medicine it is common for detailed diagnostic tests to fail to reveal the patient's ailment, in which case the conclusion is often that "there is nothing wrong with the patient", that it is simply a matter of conditioning, or that the patient should be referred to a psychologist or psychiatrist for being hysterical, hypochondriac or even delusional. Apart from the fact that the phenomenon of claimed suggestion cannot be proven - a facile assertion that often masks ignorance - and the amoral denial of the patient's suffering, such psychotherapeutic responses are often limited and ineffective. In traditional medical approaches, a differential diagnosis by an experienced traditional physician can clarify which body or bodies are affected and then offer an appropriate therapeutic intervention on them.

### Mapping the different bodies

The mapping of these different bodies is difficult and complex due to the variety of vocabulary used in different languages and the absence of an academic and systematized account in most indigenous traditions. The cultures of the Far East are undoubtedly those that have described these different

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<sup>2</sup> Medical Doctor, Founder of the Takiwasi Center, Peru: [www.takiwasi.com](http://www.takiwasi.com)

bodies with the greatest precision, although there are also confusions in vocabulary (for example, the "astral" body is understood in very different ways depending on the country, culture and tradition).

Added to this first complexity are the constitutive elements of the human being, which are not a priori corporeal, such as the soul or the spirit, and which are also found in all traditions, although they are ignored by Western science. These two words cover different concepts in different languages and cultures. The soul is sometimes psychic (Greek: psyche), sometimes spiritual (Greek: noos); the word spirit in Spanish (*espíritu*) sometimes designates the soul (spiritual instance), sometimes the mind (psychic instance), while English distinguishes between "mind" and "spirit". In the case of etheric body disorders, so-called cultural syndromes such as "*susto*" (Giove & Mabit, 2022), traditional doctors specialized in restoring the etheric body are known as "soul callers" (Hargous S., 1985).

We cannot pretend to resolve this complexity here, but by taking up the most frequent oriental classifications, of Buddhist and Hindu influence, and based on our experience, we propose the following classification equivalences:

| <b>Classical Eastern Classification</b> | <b>J. Mabit Classification</b> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Physical body                           | Physical body                  |
| Etheric body                            | Etheric body                   |
| Astral body (emotions)                  | Emotional body                 |
| Mental body (thoughts)                  | Psychic body                   |
| Causal body (karma)                     | Energy body                    |
| Supra-mental or Buddhist body           | Spiritual body                 |
| Atomic body (divine nucleus)            | Glorious body                  |

We will use the terms of our classification in the rest of this article.

In sensible creation, the different creatures are not endowed with the same bodies, and only the human being is endowed with a soul (a non-corporeal spiritual entity). The 7th body, or glorious body, is not realized until after death and is therefore not suitable for therapeutic intervention, which is why we will leave it out of our focus.

The table of correspondences of the different bodies according to the nature of each creature would be the following:

| <b>Creature</b> | Objects | Minerals | Nature beings | Plants | Animals | Human beings |
|-----------------|---------|----------|---------------|--------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Body</b>     |         |          |               |        |         |              |
| Physical        | X       | X        |               | X      | X       | X            |
| Etheric         |         |          | X             | X      | X       | X            |
| Emotional       |         |          |               |        | X       | X            |
| Psychic         |         |          |               |        |         | X            |
| Energetic       | X       | X        | X             | X      | X       | X            |
| Spiritual       |         |          |               |        |         | X            |



This reading grid attempts to account for the constants or invariants found in traditional medicines from all latitudes:

- There is a growing differentiation in nature, from minerals to human beings.
- There is a growing differentiation (vibratory rate, density, etc.) between different bodies, from the physical to the spiritual.
- All creatures have an energetic body, the basic structural community that allows exchanges between them.

### **Errors and confusions**

This illustration of two coordinates is obviously only a schematic simplification of a multidimensional reality.

For example, communication between different bodies takes place through the "mediation" of the energy body, which is located at the interface between the different bodies. The damage suffered by any body is inscribed in the energy body. To be exact, psychosomatics, for example, should be called psycho-energetic-somatics. The traditional doctor or healer acquires techniques that allow him/her to "read" the energy body to make his diagnosis and, by intervening on this energy body, he can affect all the other bodies.

For example, in addition to the physical body, the Gouro of the Ivory Coast also recognize the existence of an etheric body, which must be worked on in order to achieve healing:

*"To understand the administration of remedies (...) which enable people to escape death, it is necessary to understand the theory of the person among the Gouro. Pathology extends not only to the physical person, but also to his invisible double. The latter, connected to the body like an envelope, provides vital force and breath. Therapy will therefore be directed at the body as well as at its double, the latter affected by the violation of divine laws and those of the ancestors." (Crosnier, C. 1993).*

The first four bodies, the most undifferentiated, the physical, etheric, emotional and psychic bodies, are sexual and mortal, so they are different for men and women. The energetic, spiritual and glorious bodies are not sexual and are immortal, so they remain after death.

What the Amazonian and Andean traditions call the "spirit" (or "mothers") of minerals, plants or animals corresponds to their energetic body and not to a spiritual body that they do not possess. What is called the "consciousness" of these elements of nature would correspond to a non-corporeal spiritual instance, a tutelary spiritual entity or protective spirit, of an angelic nature, but it does not represent a consciousness proper to that element of nature.

In the exchanges between Western medicine and traditional medicine, on the one hand, but also between indigenous medicines of different cultures, on the other, the discourses often mix up the different bodies with each other, and these with the spiritual instances (the soul and the spirits) of which we will speak later. The lack of clarity in this mapping of the bodies, on the one hand, and of the spiritual instances, on the other, gives rise to constant misunderstandings and mistakes.

The most common confusions are:

- Confusing the etheric body with the energetic body.
- Confusing the mind, the human intellect or the psychic body (the reflexive "consciousness") with the spiritual body (the spiritual consciousness itself). In short, confusing mind and spirit.
- Confusing soul (non-corporeal spiritual entity) with spiritual body.

### **Christian tradition**

It should be noted that the Western Christian spiritual tradition also recognizes the existence of at least three bodies according to St. Paul's theology. For every human being, in addition to the physical body, *"just as there is a psychic body" (or "earthly" or "natural" or "animal" depending on the translation), there is also a spiritual body"* (1 Cor 15:44). According to our classification, these three bodies of St. Paul could be subdivided as follows:

- Physical body = material and etheric body
- Psychic body = emotional and psychic body
- Spiritual body = energetic and spiritual body

Jean-Claude Hanus, a physicist from Orsay who has become a priest, wonders whether mystical phenomena such as deceased saints coming into physical contact with clairvoyants, bilocation (Padre Pio, Mother Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit, etc.) or the multiplicity of out-of-body experiences during near-death experiences (NDEs) are not rather from a "deep body", spiritual, unique and multimodal, which is given to us from the moment of our conception (Hanus J-C, 2023). The question has been raised.

Christian tradition closely associates the body and the soul, which are created simultaneously at conception, and attempts to clarify the relationship between these two aspects of human nature, one visible and corporeal, the other invisible and incorporeal. The soul is not associated with one of the bodies described above, but with the heart, understood as an organ that is both physical and spiritual. St. Macarius the Great (+ 390) addresses this theme in his famous homilies:

*"The heart governs the entire corporeal organism and reigns over it, and when grace possesses the heart, it governs all the members and all the thoughts, for it is in the heart that the intellect and all the thoughts of the soul, as well as its desires, are found; through it, grace penetrates also into all the members of the body."* (Chariton de Valamo, 2004).

These thoughts and desires do not come from the psyche or the emotions (the psychic body and the emotional body) but from the soul, as Saint Macarius comments, following Jesus who made it clear: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts"* (Matthew 15:19).

### **Conclusion**

The classifications and hypotheses set out above undoubtedly require further and more detailed exploration; they only provide an essential but sufficient basic outline for a brief and synthetic

presentation. Each body or psychic entity would deserve an account of its own characteristics, functions and properties.

The failure of modern Western culture to recognize the existence of different bodies and invisible spiritual instances makes dialogue with ancestral cultures difficult, and in the specific field of healing, the contributions of traditional knowledge become almost inaudible to Western medicine. Without taking these data into account in the Western approach to traditional medicine, the debates lead to an impasse.

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