Introduction

While the "self" and "body" seem immediately perceptible and comprehensible in their physicality, they are largely cultural constructs which change over time and space, thus requiring historical study. Their modern academic study began with classic essays by Marcel Mauss in the mid-1930s.[1] The essay on the "category of the person/self" argued that this was at its simplest a universal category, as indicated by the possibility in all languages of referring to a self which was distinguished from others. At the next level, the self could be theorized as defined roles, obligations and rights pertaining to those roles, and an ethical character that together defined the nature of a person (*personne*), and which varied among cultures. The article also suggested (without always clearly distinguishing) an interiorized self (*moi*) defined by psychological states, relations to the cosmos, and spiritual relations to other such selves.[2] Finally, it sketched a triumphalist account of the emergence of a unique Western theory of the person as first a philosophical-religious conception (articulated in Christianity's theory of the soul), and ultimately a fundamental intellectual category (in modern thinking from Descartes's *cogito* through Kant) underlying the emergence of an individualism that treated the self as a discreet monad existing wholly within the mind and detached from the body (Ryle's "ghost in a machine"). This understanding was foundational to the modern world.[3]

[1] "Une Catégorie de l'esprit humain: La Notion de personne, celle de 'moi'," (1935) and "Les Techniques du corps," (1934) are both in the classic one-volume collection of his major essays, Mauss Marcel, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, ed. Claude Lévi-Strauss (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), pp. 331–386. A translation of the essay on the person/self, along with essays on its theoretical significance and case studies are published in Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds., *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). This volume, pp. 302–303, lists recent (prior to 1985) major studies on the person/self.

[2] See also Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Charles Larmore, *Les Pratiques du moi* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004); Hermann Schmitz, *Selbst sein: Über Identität, Subjektivität und Personalität* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2013). This last elaborates theories of an interior self, a "person" that straddles the inner self and the outer world of roles and rights, and a body that is crucial to understanding both. See also Schmitz, *Zur Epigenese der Person* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2017).

[3] Versions of a theory of the self that is fundamental to individualism and to modernity are elaborated in Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014); Gerald N. Izenberg, *Impossible Individuality: Romanticism, Revolution, and the Origins of Modern Selfhood, 1787–1802* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); John O. Lyons, *The Invention of the Self: The Hinge of Consciousness in the Eighteenth Century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978); Karl Joachim Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

Several critical essays and case studies written to accompany the English translation of the essay trace the crucial initial step to the philosophy of Plato rather than Christianity. Others reject this evolutionary perspective, arguing instead that the diverse practices and theories that guided both the psychologically defined inner "self" (*moi*) and the exterior "person" (*personne*) shaped by rules and laws should be treated as episodes moving toward no clear conclusion. This latter position underlies the writing over the decades of numerous studies on the theory and practice of the "person" in diverse cultures, a discourse within which this work is situated.

Mauss's essay on "techniques of the body" (written a year earlier and influenced by Marcel Granet's discussions of "bodily techniques" in early China) argued that each society developed distinctive techniques for training the body, techniques which shaped both physical capacities and associated mental mechanisms adapted to their visions of social order. Thus, the body of the Greek citizen trained for the public agon was distinct from that of a monk in his cell, or that of a modern citizen alternating between a home and the site of paid labor. Whereas the purely physical and measurable body of modern science had no history, Mauss's body conceived through its "modes of construction" was "thoroughly historicized and completely problematic."[4]

This model allowed the body to be approached from numerous disciplines – history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, art history, religion – and a vast array of perspectives. The three-volume collection *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* divided these perspectives under three rubrics. First, some employed a "vertical axis," examining training of the body to facilitate its relation to divinities above or animals below. The former included exercises through which one approached a god spatially or came to resemble one physically, training to modify those features that prevented people from participating in the divine, or rites of healing through pilgrimage or exorcism.[5] For the latter,

Michel Foucault's oeuvre focuses on the creation of the modern individual, but argues that the institutions and norms that created this person – the medical clinic, asylum, prison, and sexuality – did so through confinement and carceral discipline. See also Anthony Elliott, *Concepts of the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

[4] See Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadia Tazi, eds., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, 3 vols. (New York: Zone, 1989), "Introduction" (by Michel Feher), p. 11. These volumes provide a useful sketch of the many approaches to the body at that time. For reviews of the impact of this bodily focus on history and anthropology, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 1–33; Thomas J. Csordas, "Embodiment and Cultural Phenomenology," in *Perspectives on Embodiment*, ed. Gail Weiss and Honi Haber (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 143–162; Csordas, "Introduction: The Body as Representation and Being-in-the-World," in *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1–24; Justin E. H. Smith, ed., *Embodiment: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[5] Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Body/Meaning/Healing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in*

one developed aspects of the body that distinguished human beings from animals, or alternatively (as in the "Chart on Guiding and Pulling" [*dao yin tu* 導引徒] from Mawangdui that will be discussed later) imitated animals whose powers could extend human capacities. The second axis was "horizontal," primarily the relations of "inside" and "outside," often cultivating a soul or intelligence hidden within, or modulating the emotions, desires, and other sensations that emerged from the interior. The final rubric was "the classical distinction between organ and function," which included using bodily organs or substances as metaphors for aspects of human society, or cultivating attributes that embodied the status or role of honored types.

The most wide-ranging study of theories of the person, self, and body in early in China is Lisa Raphals, *A Tripartite Self: Body, Mind and Spirit in Early China*.[6] This book surveys most early Chinese discussions of these topics, and presents the key modern studies. Its most important argument is to elaborate the contrast between philosophical texts, which tend to emphasize the heart-mind's mastery over the body, and the texts on self-cultivation or medical treatment of the body which emphasize the key importance of the self's substances (most importantly *qi* energies) and its "spirit" (*shen* 神, also translated "soul"). The former tends to produce dualistic models that oppose mind and body, while the latter produce the "tripartite self" (of the title), elaborating a corporeal view in which both body and mind consist of such vital substances as (in order of increasing refinement) *qi*, "essence" (*jing* 精), and spirit. The discussions in this book overlap with many of the texts studied here, so it deserves careful reading.

However, the single most useful elaboration of the interlinked ideas of self, person, and body in early China is probably David Hall and Roger Ames's model of the "focus-field self," which is expounded in several books and essays.[7]

the Early Christian Era (London: Routledge, 1995); Zsuzsanna Várhelyi, "Self-Care and Health-Care: Selfhood and Religion in the Roman Imperial Elite," in *Religious Dimensions of the Self in the Second Century CE*, ed. Jörg Rüpke and Greg Woolf (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 221–242; Byron J. Good, *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 5; Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Washington, DC: Berg, 1983); Robert A. Scott, *Miracle Cures: Saints, Pilgrimages, and the Healing Powers of Belief* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Penguin, 1999); Élisabeth Claverie, *Les Guerres de la Vierge: Une anthropologie des apparitions* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

[6] Raphals, *Tripartite Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). On the emergence of soul-body dualism, see also Edward Slingerland, *Mind and Body in Early China: Beyond Orientalism and the Myth of Holism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). On the pivotal role of philosophy in the evolving ideas about the body and self, see Zhang Zailin 張再林, *Zuowei shenti zhexue de zhongguo gudai zhexue* 作為身體哲學的中國古代哲學 (Beijing: Zhonguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2008).

[7] David Hall and Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 125, 153, 192, 237–247; Ames, "The Focus-Field Self in Classical Confucianism," in *Self as Person in*

This theory is particularly valuable in that it not only offers insights into the full range of early Chinese ideas, but also (as I will discuss below) facilitates fruitful dialogue with some of the most important Western ideas about the relation of the self and the body. The idea of the "focus-field self" – which Ames elaborates primarily through Confucian and Daoist thinkers – views the person as a "focused" center embedded within an encompassing "field," or rather fields, consisting of other people, places, and, ultimately, the cosmos. This person is defined by a range of roles which he or she enacts relationally with others: son of a father or mother, elder brother of a younger brother, a descendant of deceased ancestors, etc. The person defined by these roles, obligations, and rights (to cite the Maussian idea) exists only within and through these multiple relations, not only those to close kin, but in weakening fashion with more distant kin, fellow villagers, the state's agents, and nonhumans. As emphasized more in the Daoist thinkers, any person also exists relationally as the focus of multiple fields formed with the creatures and objects within his or her ambit, and at the highest level with the cosmos viewed with the self as center. Likewise, things in the world can be understood through the multiple fields of which they form the focus/center, for example, the capital within the state, the court within the capital, the ruler within the court, etc. In all these fields radiating outward around a focus/center there is no absolute boundary between the selves and their "outside," a fact that is as true of the body as of the person.[8]

Asian Theory and Practice, ed. Roger T. Ames, Wimal Dissanayake, and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 187–212; Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 234–244, 268–278; *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 23–78; Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), pp. 66–79; Ames, *Human Becomings: Theorizing Persons for Confucian Role Ethics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), ch. 4. See also Thomas Kasulis, Ames, and Wimal Dissanayake, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), part 3; Ames and Dissanayake, eds., *Self and Deception: A Cross-Cultural Philosophical Enquiry* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); Ames, Kasulis, and Wissanayke, eds., *Self as Image in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998). For an overview of theories about early Chinese ideas of the self and the body, see Alexus McLeod, *The Dao of Madness: Mental Illness and Self-Cultivation in Early Chinese Philosophy and Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), ch. 1. On other aspects of "inner-outer" and the body, see Raphals, *Tripartite Self*, pp. 49–51, 208–215; Constance A. Cook, *Medicine and Healing Ancient East Asia: View from Excavated Texts*, Cambridge Elements in Ancient East Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 16–18.

[8] Deborah Sommer, "Boundaries of the *Ti* Body," *Asia Major* 21.1(2008): 293–324; Sommer, "The Ji Self in Early Chinese Texts," in *Selfhood East and West: De-constructions of Identity*, ed. Jason Dockstader, Hans-Georg Moller, and Gunter Wohlfahrt (Traugott Bautz, 2012), pp. 17–45; Nathan Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55.1 (1995): 5–37; He Jianjin, "The Body in the Politics and Society of Early China," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 2007; N. Scheper-Hughes and M. M. Lock, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1 (1987): 6–41; Yang Rubin 楊儒賓, *Rujia shenti guan* 儒家身體觀

While the Ames/Hall model emphasizes the multiple and evolving relations within which the person emerges, Chinese thought elaborated a similar image through the idea of *qi* (氣), translated as "energy," "vital breath," "pneuma," or "vapor." This protean concept remains central to Chinese medicine, martial arts, strategy, calligraphy, and any form of dynamism. In the centuries covered in this essay it named a primal "stuff" or "configured energy" that constituted all entities, being common to inanimate matter, plants, animals, and people. This shared substrate meant that not only people and their environment shared common principles, but also that they acted directly upon one another through their *qi*, which thus provided a physical underpinning to the focus-field model. Consequently, the outer world could drive the feelings and actions of the embodied self, and that self could radiate outward to control other humans, and even aspects of the physical world.

The earliest known graphic form of the word *qi* appears in fourth century BCE bamboo strips found in Chu tombs. The graph consists of a phonetic element over one of two semantic signifiers indicating either "fire" or "heart," suggesting dynamism associated with the mind or spirit. The Qin tended to confuse this graph with one indicating "a gift of food," an in the Han it was commonly written with "cloud" or "vapor" over "grain." Thus, by the late Warring States people seem to have associated it with the vapors rising from cooked grain. However, it was most closely linked to the idea of wind, which provided a model for its actions and served as a gloss or in synonym compounds. It was the substance of the desires and emotions that drove human actions, and in its more refined forms it also became the "essence" (*jing*) and "spirit" (*shen*) that were essential to human cogitation, reproduction, and interaction with spirits. It provided a central concept in philosophy, early healing arts, and textually constituted technical medicine for analyzing the construction both of the person and the body, and indeed for the overlapping of these two to form an embodied self.[9]

(Taipei: Zhonyang yanjiuyuan Zhonguo wen zhe yanjiusuo chou bei chu 中央研究院中國文哲研究手籌備處, 1999).

[9] Cook, *Medicine and Healing in Ancient East Asia*, pp. 14–16; Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), ch. 6; Shigehisa Kuriyama, "The Imagination of Winds and the Development of the Chinese Conception of the Body," in *Body, Subject & Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 23–41, esp. 34–38; Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (New York: Zone, 1999), ch. 6, "Wind and Self"; Michael Stanley-Baker, "*Qi* 氣: A Means for Cohering Natural Knowledge," in *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Medicine*, ed. Vivienne Lo and Michael Stanley-Baker, with Dolly Yang (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 23–50. On glossing *qi* as "vapor," and its use in early medical literature, see Donald Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (London: Kegan Paul, 1998), pp. 5–6, 24–25, 69–93, 118–139, 143–147, 163–166, 173–179. For the gloss as "configured energy," see Manfred Porkert, *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine: Systems of Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1974), pp. 62, 168–176. See also Yang Rubin, ed., *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shi Zhong de qi lun yu shenti guan* 中國古代史中的氣論與身體觀 (Taipei: Juliu Tushu Gongsi, 1993); Cai

With its permeable boundaries, mutual interactions, and interpenetration of bodily substances and mental processes, this "focus-field" person created by the movements of *qi* has been presented as distinctively Chinese, opposed to a Western self, defined by the radical separation of mind and body, and the clear definition of the measurable, physical body. However, this must be qualified. First, numerous German scholars have endorsed the *qi*-based model as a superior approach to the human body.[10] This is in part explained by the fact that the German language distinguishes the Latin-derived *Körper*, which indicates the measurable physical body or the corpse, from *Leib*, the subjective body of feelings, sensations, perceptions, and emotions, or broadly the person's temperament. As an example of this distinction, *Leibspeise* indicates one's favorite food. *Leib* matches well with the idea of a body defined through *qi* energies that link mental phenomena, physical organs, and surroundings.[11]

This has inspired phenomenologists to develop theories of a person constructed through the dynamism of the lived body, the back-and-forth between stimuli and responsive emotions, and the shaping impact of exterior "atmospheres." Most important is Hermann Schmitz, whose "new phenomenology" produced a ten-volume study moving from immediate bodily experience, through the energetic interchanges between body and environment, to the construction of multiple spaces for such cultural phenomena as art, law, and the divine. His model of the body frequently appeals to the Homeric world, where people experienced emotions as invading, external powers, and which were distributed through many sites within the body (rather than confined within the mind). The model, and related theories of objective external "atmospheres" created by crowd sentiments, the

Fanglu 蔡方鹿, *Qi* 氣 (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 1990), ch. 1–2; Chen Dexing 陳德興, *Qi lun shi wu de shenti zhexue: Yinyang, wuxing, jingqi lilun de shenti xinggou* 氣論釋物的身體哲學:陰陽,五行,景氣理論的身體形構 (Taipei: Wunan Tushu Chuban, 2009); Li Cunshan 李存山, *Qi lun yu ren xue* 氣論與仁學 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji Chubanshe, 2009); Kuroda Genji 黑田源次, *Ki no kenkyū* 氣の研究 (Tokyo: Tokyo Bijutsu, 1977), book 1; Miura Kunio 三浦國雄, *Ki no Chūgoku bunka: Kikō, yōjō, fūsui, eki* 氣の中國文化:氣功, 養生, 風水, 易 (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1994). On "spirit" (shen) and the body, see Catherine Despeux, "Âmes et animation du corps: La notion de shen dans la médicine chinoise antique, " *Extrême-Orient Extrême Occident* 29 (2007): 71–94.

[10] Gudula Linck, *Leib oder Körper: Mcnsch, Welt und Leben in der chineschischen Philosophie* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2012); Dominique Hertzer, *Das Leuchten des Geistes und die Erkenntnis der Seele: Die medizinische Vorstellung vom Seelischen als Ausdruck philosophischen Denkens – China und das Abendland* (VAS: Bad Homburg, 2006); Manfred Kubny, *Qi Lebenskraftkonzepte in China: Definitionen, Theorien und Grundlagen* (Heidelberg: Haug Verlag, 1995). On the use of early Chinese ideas about the lived body (or the body formed through living) in the thought of Martin Heidegger, see Thomas Michael, *Philosophical Enactment and Bodily Cultivation in Early Daoism: In the Matrix of the Daodejing* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), ch. 9.

[11] Thomas Ots uses the German term *Leib* to explicate Chinese *qi gong* and certain medical practices. See "The Silenced Body – the Expressive *Leib*: On the Dialectic of Mind and Life in Chinese Cathartic Healing," in *Embodiment and Experience*, pp. 116–138.