

The Primary Journey: Being the Bodymind

by Allan Badiner



Allan Badiner

Use of the term “bodymind” began in the early 1980’s when it appeared in a doctoral thesis on Japanese Buddhism by David E. Shaner, Ph.D. Zen Master Dogen (1200-1253) spoke of the bodymind in his now classical work called *The Shobogenzo*, or “*The Dharma Eye*.” The term reflected this Zen view of a person as a unified, holistic being. Indeed, Buddhism has always maintained the thesis of the non-dual oneness of body and mind. “Bodymind” has come to be a singular, interconnected expression of the irreducible and inseparable human being.

In fact, modern scientific research has produced much evidence for the non-dual nature of the human bodymind. One example is the identification of brain functions that are distributed throughout the body. Pharmacologist Candace Pert, an early pioneer in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, became known for her theory of how the “bodymind” functions as a single psychosomatic network of information molecules, which control our health and physiology. “There is a mind in the body,” says Pert, “and a body in the mind.” The title of one of her books, “*Your Body Is Your Subconscious Mind*,” says about it all.

Patanjali laid out what could be considered the first exposition on the integration of body and mind in his yoga sutras almost 2,000 years ago. More recently, Integral Transformative Practice pioneers Michael Murphy and the late George Leonard have taken both an intellectually rigorous as well as a practical view. Also, of course, the integral philosopher Ken Wilber has written reams on the subject, including this (my favorite): “All of my books are lies. They are simply maps of a territory, shadows of a reality, gray symbols dragging their bellies across the dead page, suffocated signs full of muffled sound and faded glory, signifying absolutely nothing. And it is the nothing, the Mystery, the Emptiness alone that needs to be realized: not known but felt, not thought but breathed, not an object but an atmosphere, not a lesson but a life.”

Self-suffocation seems to be more a function of the “mind aspect” of the bodymind. We can spin our take on various situations, and we can, and often do, weave stories designed to make us feel comfortable or safe. Life in the mind seems like an endless loop of lining up the next thing on your to-do list, composing emails, stewing over an argument with loved ones, counting calories, or admonishing oneself for gaining weight.

What does it really mean to be “in your

body,” and why is it so hard to do? I have some experience with meditation practice that teaches us to be present, embodied and in the moment, and sometimes it’s still hard. Sometimes, being in the body doesn’t seem as interesting as being in the mind. It’s quieter, less noise, and without drama. The mind, however, seems much more seductive, cunning, clever and persuasive, and it can tell many a prodigious and fascinating tale.

For this reason, and from my own experi-

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ences, I suspect that true integrated wisdom resides in the body aspect of the bodymind. The body aspect won't lie to you, and the "feeling" you have about something being true is deep, not subject to argument, and not particularly cerebral. It is that bodily felt knowingness akin to that pleasurable energy of being grounded, or a sense of "being in the body," which I consider to be the ultimate gift of life.

Two, among many, experiences that illustrate this idea are worth mentioning, and both have to do, at least partially, with the use of psychedelics.

Many years ago I was a frequent visitor to the Ojai Foundation, near Los Angeles where I was living at the time. Ojai was like a refuge from the urban madness, and a place to feel the often suppressed messages from deep within the body. Joan Halifax, an anthropologist who studied with Joseph Campbell, started the foundation as a place for the wisdom of American Indians to meet the ancient teachings of the East (ie, Buddhism and Yoga, etc).

I had a friend named Lola who lived on the land for many years, and while neither of us were particularly interested in marijuana, or yoga, it became a sunset ritual for us to get in full view of Topa Topa, the grand mountains overlooking the entire Happy Valley and take a few hits from a joint, following which our bodies seemed to almost reflexively

assume various yoga postures. I never failed to be astonished at how effortless and pleasurable the moves were in those conditions, and it was clear that these conditions included but were not limited to the muted golden rays of the sun, the beautiful face of the mountain, the freshest possible air, the sweetest company of my friend, the instinctual inclination to stretch, and the plant wisdom that we

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had just ingested. There had been few experiences in my life to that point that allowed me such a powerful and pleasurable sense of being in the body.

Another favorite refuge from urbanity was the Esalen Institute. Through friends I was able to secure a dose of 2CB, the synthetic psychedelic that first gained

popularity as a legal ecstasy replacement in the mid 1980s, until it also became a scheduled substance. Substances aside, to take a hot sulphur bath overlooking the moonlit waves of the Pacific, is alone enough to deliver you to your sensual body and open your being to great enjoyment. This I know from many such moments in the tubs. But the night that 2CB was added to the mix catapulted the scene into a bodymind event that would forever change my life.

I experienced my body as an ancient vessel consisting of eternal matter-cells that were passed along an unbroken temporal continuum and that potentialized an extraordinary, unprecedented, and long lasting passion for life itself. I can only do it justice by describing it as a full blown experience of grace.

I have wondered many times how I knew that this was grace, or if grace actually exists. How can you argue for that rationally? Is it not something that you just know intuitively in the body?

My meditation practice has become a place to fully remember these experiences. After breaking through monkey-mind, persistent and discursive thought and other mental obstacles, I can finally relax into the awareness that the universe is one living organism, and that I am a part of that wholeness. This is my proof for grace, and the reality of the bodymind. For this, I am grateful for psychedelics. •



Danielle Bohmer

Poem

By Danielle Bohmer

Our lovely scene undwindles and its players unwind,
dispersing all throughout the crowd, clearing foggy skies

The psychologists' creation; one another's clientele
Reaching for a practice where minds and souls excel!

While dulling minds is futile and acceptance won't be found,
in this realm, surrendering, new perspective surrounds...

Extracting from the core we find that which is purely true...
perchance an application, to show we're all in tune.