

## Our Real Body is the World

In traditional Advaita Vedanta teaching, the body is largely ignored. Since we are not the body, why pay any attention to it? But Jean Klein realised that to become fully established in the non-dual understanding, our built-in sense of relationship between myself, my body and the world needs to be investigated, not just intellectually, but also at the level of bodily sensations. Here is his description of how he came to incorporate exploration of the body into his teaching:

About a year after I returned from India I found it necessary to expand the teaching to the psychosomatic level. It became apparent, through meeting people, that identification with what we are not is confirmed and reinforced by contraction on the psychosomatic level. The I-concept is only a contraction on the level of the body-mind. It has no more reality than a bad habit. It is a defence against being nobody.

In getting to know the body-mind, one can discover more clearly the nature of the identification, and so let it go. The relaxed body is a relaxed mind. In a relaxed body and mind you are open to receiving, available, welcoming, open to the openness. The relaxed, light, energetic, sattvic body-mind are a near expression of your real nature. It is almost impossible for a conditioned body-mind to be receptive to truth, open to grace. It can happen that truth pierces through all conditioning since the insight into our true nature ultimately has nothing to do with the body or the mind. But it is exceedingly rare. My teaching also on the level of the body was only to make discrimination more likely and to help more of my friends be available to global insight. Of course, I also spontaneously taught all I knew, which included knowledge of the body. But it was really about availability.

[Jean Klein, *Transmission of the Flame*, Prologue]

When we have a liberating glimpse of our true nature, it is common for feelings of expansion, relaxation and 'lightness of being' to arise in the body. But they tend not to last, and after a while, we return to the sense of being inside a limited body. Here is a beautifully-expressed description from Ellen Emmet:

We all remember or experience blessed moments in which our true nature of pure undivided and universal Awareness, echoes at the emotional, tactile, and sensual levels of experience. Our body then is almost transparent, without borders, suffused with a subtle quality of vibrating openness and sensitivity. It is impersonal yet shares its substance intimately with all that is experienced.

For most of us however, the body has been deeply and lastingly conditioned by the belief that "I" refers to an individual person, limited in time by birth and death and located inside a body, separate from other bodies and from the world out there. Corresponding and echoing this belief in separation, the feeling of the body has become a set of repetitive psychosomatic habits, creating feelings of solidity, density, emotional inertia, and contraction designed to perpetuate the projected image of the "I" that seems to live at its centre, with his or her past and future on either side. Such a body's dynamism is ruled by the complex and restrictive impulses to protect, defend or affirm itself.

In this way, the body-mind seems to become the envelope or the cage in which "I" appear to live and the stuff that "I" seem to be made of, whilst the real "I" of undivided Awareness seems to have shrunk itself into confinement, limitation, and fragmentation.

[Ellen Emmet: [\*The Essence of Yoga\*](#)]

The methods of body-exploration that Jean Klein brought to the West continue to be taught by Francis in his retreats. He calls it yoga, although it is quite different from the hatha-yoga that is widely available in sports centres and health clubs. For the first time this year, he has run on-line retreats which have included yoga. Here is his introduction to yoga from the first on-line retreat:

What is the goal of yoga? The goal of yoga is not better health, better fitness, better flexibility in the body. The real goal of yoga is precisely to eliminate the feeling that we are a separate consciousness. And if I use the word 'feeling' it is because it is obviously in direct relation with the way we perceive our body and the world. So the purpose of the yoga is to bring the way we perceive the body and the world into compliance with the understanding that our nature, our reality is universal. If our reality which we experience as awareness, our real self, is universal rather than limited and separate, our real body is the universe. So the goal of the yoga is to shift the way we perceive the body and the world from one in which we perceive them as two distinct and separate entities, to a new mode of perception in which such separation has disappeared. So that's the goal of yoga. That's very simple.

[Francis Lucille, 10/09/2021 On-line Retreat: *An Introduction to Meditation and Yoga*]

The idea that 'our real body is the universe' might initially seem a little crazy. I am aware of my bodily sensations, but I'm not aware of other people's bodily sensations. I seem to be able to control the movements of my body, but I have almost no control over the movements of other bodies. So there seems to be something different about my body which doesn't apply to other objects in the world. This is how Francis answers those objections:

I am not denying that you appear to have a special connection with your body. Compare this with your car. When you are driving your car, you see it from the inside, whereas you see all others from the outside. So although you seem to have a special relationship with your car, it doesn't imply that you are your car. It is the same in relation to your body. You are the consciousness in which your body-mind and all other body-minds appear. However, this doesn't imply that you, as consciousness, are only this single body-mind organism or that you are a by-product of it.

The belief that you are in your body is simply an interpretation of your actual experience. It is also an interpretation to think that you have a closer connection with some sensations than with others or to think that some sensations are on the inside and others are on the outside. All you need to do is to see it for what it is: an interpretation.

Such an interpretation may be convenient in some situations, and when it is, we use it. However, beware of becoming attached to an interpretation, of becoming hypnotized by it, and thinking that it is a representation of how things really are. ...

Our real body includes the mind and the entire universe. This is the body we have always had and the one in which all bodies, gross and subtle, come into existence. We are not interested in what things appear to be, but in what things really are. It is important to be aware of what is fact and what is interpretation. Never take interpretation for fact.

We never actually experience the body as we conceive of it. We experience sensations, and it is only a subsequent interpretation that tells us 'this sensation arose in my foot'. At the time of the sensation, our foot was not present and our body was not present, only the sensation was present.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*, Be Present Without Intention]

It is one thing to understand that my real body is the universe, but quite another to really feel it and to sense the body in that way. One of the tools that Jean Klein used to provide an intermediate step was the concept of the subtle body or energy body, and this is also used by Francis in his yoga meditations. It is helpful because the subtle body has no fixed borders, whereas we regard the physical body as ending at the skin. So by transferring identification from the physical body to the subtle body we allow the feeling of 'I' to expand beyond the confines of the physical body. Here is Francis's description of the subtle body:

*Q: I'd like to understand more about the subtle body, the energetic body that Jean Klein talks about. ... How can we feel it and get in touch with it?*

FL: Our phenomenal experience is two-fold; meaning everything we perceive in our human experience is divided into two categories. First, the world, which we perceive through the five senses, and that is what is called the gross realm, and it is the realm in which the intersubjective agreement applies. In other words, you and I are hearing this sound as I speak at this moment. This sound is part of the world because you and I are perceiving it. Whereas Francis's thoughts and bodily sensations and Gordon's thoughts and bodily sensations are not part of the world. They constitute the subtle realm of our human experience.

In turn, this subtle realm of our human experience is subdivided in two categories: one is thoughts, images, things we perceive in dreams; the other is bodily sensations. So the realm of bodily sensations is part of the subtle world and it is that which we call the subtle body. That's very simple. And of course there is a correlation between the subtle body that we perceive, and the physical body that we see, or the gross body that we see in the mirror. There is a connection that goes both ways. However, there is a marked difference between the two. Now because of this correlation that exists between our bodily sensations and our physical body that we see in the mirror, we tend to superimpose onto the bodily sensations the physical limitation of the body that appears in the mirror. In other words, we tend to superimpose the borders of the physical body somehow to the subtle body. This superimposition of the borders to something that appears in a totally different realm and is in fact borderless, seems to justify the belief that I, as awareness, am limited. That I, awareness, am attached to this body, and not to the rest of the world, to the rest of the space.

If awareness is not limited by the body-mind, if awareness is universal, in fact our real body is the universe. And the universe should be perceived as a seamless continuation of the human body. When that happens, the border, the envelope superimposed onto the bodily sensations disappears. The subtle body, which was already present as this bodily sensation, seems to be liberated into the space. People attribute the expression 'subtle body' or 'body of energy' only to the bodily sensations that obtain when this liberating experience occurs. But that's not true because the subtle body pre-exists such a liberating experience in the form of bodily sensations. What happens then is that we realise that the bodily sensations don't have to remain confined within the borders of the physical body. And then we discover that in fact everybody quite often moves their subtle body beyond the usual envelope.

An example: if you see a beautiful sculpture in a museum and you feel the marble to be polished, and you feel it to be cold, also. Although you are at a distance from it, you explore it with the tactile sensation of your hands. It is not intellectual. It is your subtle body going there. When you are in a room and the room is full of bulky furniture and you have a hard time walking through it because there is not enough room for you to walk, you feel a sensation of uneasiness, of lack of freedom. What is happening is that with your subtle body you are moving and you are

banging against the furniture. These are examples, because in the enjoyment of a work of art, be it a monument or a sculpture or a painting, we use this tactile body, this tactile sense. We move out of the physical body.

So that's a lengthy explanation, but the general idea is this: if it is true that awareness is universal and not confined to this body, then it follows that our real body is the universe. And then the subtle body gets liberated when we have this experience of a seamless continuity between our human body and the universe.

Another example, imagine that you are mountain climbing and you reach a place where there is a very deep canyon, but it's a mini-canyon. On top it's only one yard. But it's 20 yards vertically. So in your path, you need to jump over that. It's not a problem to jump one yard. But the problem is the 20 yards possible accident. So you are not going to go there and just jump like that. What do you do? Let's assume you must jump – you have a big bear coming after you. You must jump. But you are going to prepare. How do you prepare? With your tactile body you are going to feel the jump exactly. It's like a cat who sees a bird. He chatters his teeth, he prepares to grab the bird. So with his tactile body he moves forward and jumps at the bird. Also, when you see someone you love, you caress them, you embrace them with your tactile body.

*Q: Before you even touch them?*

FL: Yes.

[Francis Lucille, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020: [Our Real Body Is The Universe](#)]

For those who would like to experiment with some yoga meditations, here are some possibilities:

1. The best approach, in my view, is to learn the techniques through attending one of Francis's or Rupert's retreats where you can also ask questions about any difficulties you may have.
2. There are some introductory yoga meditations available free on [Rupert's YouTube channel](#) and [Ellen's YouTube channel](#).
3. There is a comprehensive set of yoga meditations available for purchase through Rupert's website, under the title [Transparent Body, Luminous World](#).
4. Billy Doyle, who studied with Jean Klein, has produced an excellent book describing the various yoga techniques taught by Jean Klein in a form that you can use to design your own yoga experiments: 'Yoga in the Kashmir Tradition: The Art of Listening: Following the Teachings of Jean Klein' ISBN 978-1999353568

## Contemplation

*We begin by listening to our experience of the body directly, without the usual mediation of a concept, memory or image. We take our time, reawakening the tactile and sensual level of experience below the threshold of the rational experience. We allow the memory of a frozen body to melt into the moment-to-moment music of temperatures, textures, weight, pressure, vibration, pulsation, expansion and contractions. We welcome the flow of sensation in a quality of openness and sensitivity that is undirected and un-volitional, free of any agenda, judgment, or intention.*

[Ellen Emmet]