

WALKING THE TALK: The Principles and Practices of Embodied Spirituality

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*There is no question that there is an unseen world. The problem is how far is it from
midtown and how late is it open?*
~Woody Allen

I was 24 years old when I arrived in India for the first time. I had only a one-way ticket, a change of clothes, my journal, and a small handful of cash. Not an Indian rupee nor a guidebook to my name. My sole intention for that trip was to learn to listen to, and follow, the true voice of the heart. Even at that time I had done enough spiritual practice and psychological work to understand that not every voice that came from within was the voice of the heart. That there were, as Russian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff taught, multiple “I’s” within each of us. I knew the true voice of the heart had near-doubles, imitations, and even outright sabotaging impostors, as well as sincere but unobjective aspects of the self that did their best to provide spiritual guidance from within but whose voice still did not represent the innermost voice of the heart.

Yet even armed with that awareness, what I could not have appreciated so early in my spiritual search was the immensity of the task before me—that I must learn not only to access the true voice of the heart, but to then integrate that understanding into the body on a cellular level, into the deep grooves of psychological conditioning, into all aspects of daily life. To integrate that nondual source of wisdom into every microfiber of dualistic expression. I could not have imagined then that the mere insight into nondual reality—as awe-inspiring and life-changing as it is—was merely the beginning of the spiritual

journey rather than its completion. That I could not and would not be satisfied until I could find a way to integrate that nondual wisdom such that it would gradually transmute all aspects of my experience—from intimate relationships and friendships, to sexuality, to child raising, to my relationship with the environment. I simply could not have known what such an integration would require. How potent and stubborn our mental habits and repetitive thought-forms are; how deeply the conditioning of karma, psychology, and a society based on ignorance, scarcity, and fear had worked its way into the cellular structure of the body. To *embody* my nondual insight and experience would be no small task.

Since that first trip to India, a great deal has transpired. I have engaged over a decade of discipleship with my own spiritual teacher, Lee Lozowick, who is a master at revealing the countless forms of self-deception we encounter on the spiritual path, ranging from spiritual narcissism, to erroneous notions of enlightenment, to a collectively mistaken notion of the goal of spiritual life itself (Caplan, 1999). I have done extensive research into the movement of contemporary spirituality in the Western world, and interviewed many of the greatest teachers, mystics and scholars in the field, as well as countless spiritual aspirants. As a result of my research and of working as a spiritual counselor with clients and teaching at several spiritually oriented universities in the U.S., I have found myself privy to an uncommon body of spiritual data—what we might call “the underbelly of enlightenment.” The kind of spiritual gossip that would make any serious aspirant of the path quiver in their shoes if they took it seriously and realized that absolutely nobody, including themselves, is exempt from such spiritual shortcomings, and that anyone, including themselves, can fall.

I have heard harrowing tales of how some of the most admired, “enlightened” teachers of our time have abandoned their children in their pursuit of spirituality; how they have used spiritual practice to avoid human intimacy and mistreat their intimate partners, often using spiritual terminology itself to justify this dismissal (Caplan, 2002b). Scandals of sex, money, and power pervade the contemporary spiritual scene like a lewd virus that spreads undetected until it has caused irreparable damage. Nearly every time I give a public presentation, somebody approaches me and begins, “I’ve got a story the likes of which you have never heard . . .,” at which time they proceed to tell me a relatively common story about how “X” teacher, a self-professed celibate, slept with countless students, claiming they were providing a “tantric initiation”; or how they cheated on their wife and had sexual relationships with the young women and men in the community; or how they forbid women in the community to have children, telling them it would cause too much attachment, or that it was impossible to raise a healthy child before one was enlightened oneself. They tell me stories of how self-proclaimed enlightened teachers manipulated their students to give them large quantities of money, or how their narcissism ran rampant and they ended up lying, cheating, and abusing their students and loved ones—whether the abuse occurred on a physical, psychological/emotional, or spiritual level. As Theravadan Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield is fond of saying, “If you want to know how enlightened somebody is, ask their husband/wife.”

So what is the real nature of the problem we are facing here? How can human beings experience great satoris, momentous breakthroughs into the nondual nature of experience, and mind-shattering mystical visions while continuing to express themselves with the same, if not greater, ignorance, arrogance, aggression and violence that is the

hallmark of Western civilization? How is it, as John Welwood wrote in *The Sacred Mirror* (2003), that “all the great attainments in the area of spiritual practice and realization, wonderful as they are, have hardly begun to transform the overall quality of human relationships on this planet, which are still driven by the most primitive of motivations and emotions” (p. 161)? Whereas mystical and nondual experiences may have a profound impact on us—perhaps the greatest of which is to initiate us into a lifelong commitment to the spiritual path—it is clear that for most people, if not everyone, accessing nondual states of consciousness is not equal to integrating them.

Therefore, instead of misinterpreting the shortcomings of spiritual teachers and spiritual practitioners either to self-righteously separate ourselves from the “spiritual sinners” who fall so low (do we know what we would *really* do if given that power?) or to justify our own disillusionment, laziness and failure to take responsibility for our own deepest spiritual possibilities, why don’t we instead engage a deep collective inquiry into the subject? Why not become passionately curious about our own personal blind spots in relationship to our own spiritual development, as well as about the shortcomings of the spiritual movement in general, so that we can work toward a new spiritual integration that will allow us to truly listen to the voice of the embodied heart? Why not dare to be part of a movement toward spiritual integration that has rarely been achieved either in ancient or modern culture? I believe that one of the greatest challenges of modern spirituality is to find a way, both individually and collectively, to integrate our spiritual insight and experience into all aspects of our daily lives, a principle and practice referred to in this essay as *embodied spirituality*.

The principle of embodiment refers to the integration within the body of all levels of mental, emotional, and spiritual development. “A *fully* embodied spirituality,” writes Jorge Ferrer, “emerges from the creative interplay of both immanent and transcendent spiritual energies in complete individuals who embrace the fullness of human experience while remaining firmly grounded in body and earth” (Tikkun, 2006).

The Bauls of Bengal, an obscure sect of practitioners from India, describe their practice of embodied spirituality as *kaya sadhana*, which means “the practice of ultimate realization *in the body* in this lifetime.” They say that God dwells within the body of human beings, and that the most effective way to know God is through one’s own embodied experience. The call of embodied spirituality is to learn to access the truth of our own divinity, and to infuse all aspects of reality with this awakened attention—beginning with our own bodies, and extending into the greater bodies of family, community, culture, country, humanity, the earth, and the cosmos itself. Our embodiment begins with ourselves and gradually extends outward to heal the world.

Although such embodiment sounds great (who could argue with it?), for those who have given such integration an earnest attempt, or for those spiritual aspirants who have been brutally self-honest with themselves regarding how effectively they have integrated their spiritual insight into their moment-to-moment experience (the easiest place for a self-check is one’s relationship with one’s intimate partners and children), we see that the practice of embodiment is much easier said than done! Wouldn’t it be more convenient to use the vast array of spiritual technologies available to us to transcend dualistic experience and leave our bodies? To find a way to rest in the eternal now such

that we would never again have to face our past trauma? To meditate our way through the illusion of psychology and personal history?

It certainly seems that it would be simpler if such transcendence were an option, yet for most people it does not prove to be possible in any lasting way. That is why people often emerge from an extended meditation retreat feeling full of peace and serenity only to find themselves almost immediately reacting with great emotion to their partner, cursing other drivers on the highway, or regressing into familiar, self-sabotaging mental and emotional habits. Unfortunately (from ego's perspective), and fortunately (from the perspective of the need to integrate our spiritual wisdom), the areas where we have not integrated our spiritual wisdom seem to catch up with us sooner if not later.

Nondual Insight and the Danger of Spiritual Bypassing

“Spiritual bypassing,” a term coined by John Welwood, refers to the phenomenon of using spiritual ideas and practices to bypass or avoid dealing with certain personal or emotional “unfinished business,” to shore up a shaky sense of self, or to belittle basic needs, feelings, and developmental tasks, all in the name of enlightenment (Welwood, 2000).

The primary arenas in which most spiritual aspirants fall unconscious, regardless of their degree of insight, boil down to money, power, and sexuality, the realm in which the fruits of our spiritual integration are expressed . . . or not. Jack Kornfield tells the story of returning from Asia in his late twenties as a young monk dressed in robes, finding himself in an intimate relationship, and quite shocked to see how easily his inner peace could be destabilized by the psychological challenges of human intimacy. Most

spiritual teachers, if they are willing to be honest, could share a similar story, whether it relates to sexuality and intimacy, money, power, or spiritual bypassing.

Contemporary schools of body-centered psychotherapy, including Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing and Staci Hane's Somatic and Trauma work, suggest that psychological trauma is stored in the body on a cellular level. The "trauma" they speak about applies to almost everyone in modern times, whether or not we remember any single event as the cause of our wounding. When this trauma is unhealed, it eventually catches up with us in spiritual life.

It is important to recognize that most contemporary spiritual traditions—particularly those that developed in the East, where the psychological and cultural context is entirely different—simply were not designed to penetrate the cellular, psychological wounding caused by the type of trauma that is so prevalent in Western culture. Particularly when engaging with Eastern-based spiritual technologies, as transcultural and objective as their wisdom appears to be, it is our job to see to it that this wisdom becomes integrated with the particular types of spiritual bypassing and psychological unconsciousness that we are prone to as Westerners. It is only recently that new psychotherapeutic approaches (see Lynn Marie Lumiere's essay "Healing Trauma in the Eternal Now" in *The Sacred Mirror*) have begun applying nondual approaches to spirituality to the healing of trauma.

Many of the contemporary schools of Advaita Vedanta work from a "top down" approach in which nondual states are accessed, often on the level of mind or spirit. Ideally, those insights integrate into the bodily, psychic, and psychological levels of the student's experience. Yet, all too often this challenging integration does not occur.

Because many of these schools offer a path of “instant enlightenment,” rather than a more gradual approach, there is a tendency to presume enlightenment at the first hint of awakening (Caplan, 1999). In addition, many do not educate their students on the importance of formal spiritual and psychological practices to prepare the body and psyche to integrate the tremendous energetic “voltage” that such states bring with them. Consequently, the body is unprepared to assimilate and integrate the experience. There will always be “fast food” seekers of spirituality who want a quick fix, and “half baked” teachers (most of whom are well meaning) who are all too eager to give it to them. The powerful spiritual “technologies” such as many of the popular neo-Advaita approaches offer easily lend themselves to this fast food approach.

Furthermore, when an individual experiences a nondual state, the illusory nature of psychological constructs and relative reality is temporarily apparent. However, because such states are highly transitory, what is often left of the experience is a memory of the realization. This memory can be useful, or an impediment. If the memory serves as a reminder that most of our “problems” are largely a misperception of the mind based on conditioned constructs, rather than something true and real, or if the memory inspires us to continually open to a greater reality that exists within us, it is likely to be useful. However, what often occurs, particularly if there is not adequate awareness of the dangers of self-deception and spiritual bypassing, is that the egoic, dualistic mind coopts the nondual insight—“adopting” its realizations of ultimate, nondual reality—and uses this knowledge to avoid dealing with the gritty, murkier aspects of relative reality. The nondual insight, which belongs to the realm of absolute reality, fails to encompass many

of the critical aspects of psychological integration which belong to the domain of relative reality (Welwood, 2000).

Of course such misconceptions are not inherent in nondual wisdom itself, nor to any specific school of nondual wisdom, but arise in the context of ego's relationship to nondual perception. It is therefore critical to remain alert to the danger of spiritual bypassing in which the enlightened aspects of the individual remain blind to that which remains unilluminated within them.

As a playful example, I will excerpt here part of a chapter from my forthcoming book, *Pandora's Secret* (this was also published in *Radical Spirit*, 2002). The passage is based on a satire written about my experience with spiritual men—whom I referred to as “zen boyfriends”—I met in my early twenties. A zen boyfriend, in this context, is defined as “a man who skillfully uses spiritual practices and ideals as an excuse for his terror of, and refusal to be in, any type of real relationship with a woman.”

By the time he got back from two years of satsang in India, Jake thought he had become enlightened, though he wouldn't have dared to say as much. He had become a student of one of those Indian teachers who skillfully create mystical experiences in their groupies by temporarily cutting through their psychological blocks to union and then declaring them enlightened. The master gets a swollen head and an immense reputation for being able to enlighten people, and thousands of Western hippies who haven't begun to face their own darkness believe they have risen above it and then proceed without solicitation to try to bestow the same boon upon others. Jake was a living example.

The first night was all right, as far as Zen boyfriends went. I enjoyed hearing of his adventures over a cappuccino, only occasionally irritated by his references to having “seen through the nature of reality” or having “become one with everything.” Of course, by early evening he needed space, which meant that his new unity with everything precluded union with me. It was a hauntingly familiar story.

The next day, as we walked in Muir Woods in meditative silence at his request, my patience with his spiritual game ran out. I tried the direct approach. “Jake, if we're going to hang out together I need to feel like you're really here with me and not always so detached.”

“But who is the ‘you’ who wants to hang out with the ‘me’?” he queried in response, refusing my invitation to descend from the nondual universe he had convinced himself he was inhabiting to a place where we might have a real conversation.

“I am the me and *you* are the you!”

“There is no difference, so we can never really be apart or together—it’s all the same.”

“You’re full of shit.”

“But who do you think is the ‘me’ that is full of shit?”

“I think it’s YOU!”

“Who’s getting angry?”

“I’m getting angry.”

“Look into my eyes, what do you see?”

“You.”

“Look more deeply. Now what do you see?”

“I see a lonely man who thinks he’s enlightened.” Frustrated and teary-eyed, I walked away and sat on a log by the stream trying to figure out why I kept attracting these men.

He followed, and sat down beside me, oblivious to having discounted my plea for relationship in the name of spirituality. “Why did you come all the way over here to cry?”

I give him an end-of-the-relationship look. “Because there was no one there to hold me if I cry, and I’d just as soon cry alone than cry with nobody.”

Access to spiritual truth, when not integrated, is a very dangerous weapon. We cannot assume that simply because we have had profound spiritual illumination the darkness within us—however illusory we have perceived it to be from our state of realization—has dissipated. If we do not learn to manage our psychology, our psychology will continue to manage us.

I believe that the primary value of nondual insight is discovered when that perception is integrated into the dualistic world. Why? Because duality—the world of manifestation and form—is simply one expression of the nondual

The Inseparability of Nonduality and Duality.

Ngakpa Chogyam, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher from Wales, explains that nonduality, or emptiness, has two facets: one is the empty, or nondual, and the other is form, or duality. Therefore, duality is not illusory, but rather one *aspect* of nonduality. Like the two sides of a coin, the formless reality has two aspects—one is form, the other is formless (personal interview, 2002). When we perceive duality as separate from nonduality (or nonduality as separate from duality), we do not engage the world of manifestation from a perspective of clarity, and thereby we fall into an erroneous relationship with it. From this perspective it is not “life” that is *maya*, or illusion; rather it is our relationship to the world that is illusory.

The teachings of the inseparability between nonduality and duality are found in many traditions. The *Heart Sutra*, the most well-known sutra of Mahayana Buddhism, states that “matter is not different from emptiness, and emptiness is not different from matter. Matter is emptiness and emptiness is matter.”

Similarly, the Pratyabhijnahridayam, one of the doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism, states, “The Lord has the universe for a body.” In Hindu tradition, the *lingam* is a phallic symbol that represents Lord Shiva, or the masculine principle of formless truth. It sits at the base of a *yoni*, which is roughly shaped like a vagina and represents Shakti, or the feminine principle of manifestation. Together they represent the point of enlightenment.

Therefore, the great nondual insight of oneness is, in its optimal expression, simultaneously the insight of oneness that pervades all duality. In *Wearing the Body of Visions*, Ngakpa Chogyam writes, “The limitless multiplicity of the world of form is seen as providing limitless opportunities for the realization of non-duality: emptiness is presented *through* form.” (p. 172) In *The Sacred Mirror* (2003) John Welwood affirms:

Letting the relative be as it is, then, reveals the absolute. Thus there is no need to give absolute being a special status apart from the relative process of form evolving in time, for these are inseparable. Realizing this frees us up to move fluidly between engaging with our experience and discovering its spacious indefinable nature, without regarding either side as more real than the other. There is no need to set up any divide between duality and nonduality. (p.154)

In contemporary times, when human beings are collectively manifesting a world dominated by greed, violence, and the capacity for self-destruction, we can no longer afford to keep our spiritual insight on the transcendental mountaintop, but are instead called to penetrate and transmute the dualistic world of form and manifestation with the diamond perception of nonduality.

The Question of Integration

There is no one formula for how integration occurs. Every human being has distinct karma and an inimitable psychospiritual composition. Therefore, whereas there may be general patterns through which integration occurs, the precise process through which any given human being becomes spiritually integrated is necessarily unique. The truly integrated human being—who has assimilated and embodied a profound level of spiritual realization such that it penetrates all aspects of his or her life—is the rarest among human beings, and of the few who have neared this goal, each has had his or her own unique unfolding. Still, I believe that such integration marks the evolution of spiritual culture that awaits us, and thus it is important to engage a collective inquiry to explore various approaches and theories of psychospiritual integration.

Many of the new schools of nondual wisdom advocate what they call a “waking down” approach. Through various techniques, the spiritual teacher, or therapist, aids the student or client to perceive nondual awareness. Through this help, the student or client

accesses a distinct vantage point from which he or she may perceive important aspects of spiritual truth, including: 1) the empty, or nonexistent, nature of the “I” who believes himself or herself to have difficulties; 2) the nature of the conditioned mind which creates stories and histories that are, in essence, highly subjective; 3) the transitory nature of all experience. The benefits of this powerful, ancient approach—particularly in its new application to Western psychotherapies—are numerous and well documented throughout this book and its accompanying volume, *The Sacred Mirror*. Its primary danger, as discussed earlier, involves often subtle and undetected forms of spiritual bypassing which easily arise in individuals who are not well grounded, who have a tendency to dissociate from their bodies, and who do not have a reliable, external source of spiritual guidance and feedback.

On the far other end of the spectrum we find most of the more common forms of psychotherapy: therapies that focus strictly on the “stuff” of life, the contents of consciousness. These therapies boldly take on the great mire of the mind, the labyrinth of personal history, the landmines of trauma, the endless wounds of confusion and pain that mark our personal past. Such therapies endeavor to unwind the knots of the deep psyche one by one, or at best in small groupings.

The dangers inherent in these types of therapies are numerous, and quite familiar to many of us who have experienced them. One can remain forever mired in the contents of mind and psyche—endlessly seeking to disentangle a dualistic universe that has at its essence no substance. To attempt to work with the contents of consciousness, especially to try to “heal” them without having any experiential knowledge of what consciousness is, will necessarily lend itself to countless errors and misperceptions. Similar to the

medicines that treat symptoms only without understanding or addressing the underlying causes of the illness itself, traditional psychotherapies often fail to address the core issues of consciousness itself, and are therefore limited by their very nature.

My personal approach—both in my own transformational process as well as in my work with clients—lies somewhere between these diverse perspectives and is characterized by a principle that my spiritual teacher, Lee Lozowick, termed *enlightened duality*, defined as “the realization of nonduality as expressed in and through the body and the full expression of all of life, experiencing and enjoying it as it is, without identification.” The *context* of enlightened duality is nondual awareness, while its *content* is duality.

From the perspective of enlightened duality, the key to effectively working with all the “stuff” of this world without getting caught in the mire of it is an abiding awareness of the nondual nature of all manifest phenomena. Whereas perhaps the nondual perspective is not available to the practitioner at all times, it has been glimpsed powerfully enough so that the individual’s *context* of enlightened perception becomes increasingly grounded and stabilized. Thus, while the practitioner of enlightened duality goes about his or her day, the world of duality and manifestation is engaged fully, including whatever emotion, neurosis, effort, struggle, or joy arises. Nothing is denied as illusory, prematurely transcended, or “spiritualized” away; yet, bringing nondual awareness to the moment has an enormous impact on the clarity that the individual can express in any given situation.

Enlightened duality works with all the gritty, neurotic, profane, and imagined “unspiritual” aspects of our experience, yet views all experience from the context of

oneness. Thus it is similar to the “top down” approaches of contemporary schools of nondual wisdom in its adherence in nondual truth. It differs from these approaches in that it does not directly evoke nondual experience through teaching or technique, but instead this awareness serves as a silent, prevalent context from which the ordinary stuff of life is considered. When enlightened duality is applied to therapy, the nondual perspective is transmitted to the client through the energy or awareness of the therapist such that spiritual insight arises naturally within the client’s own awareness, even though spiritual theory and technique may never be mentioned.

The primary danger of enlightened duality is that by focusing so much on duality and manifestation one can fall into the trap of presuming he or she is abiding in a nondualistic context when in fact he or she has fallen prey to a divided perception of reality. Whereas all practitioners of spirituality are subject to the dangers of spiritual bypassing, I believe that enlightened duality is less prone to this danger than many of the popular schools of neo-Advaita Vedanta.

The Practice of Acceptance

The practice of *acceptance* is perhaps the most potent tool with which to unfold an embodied, passionate, bright, truthful relationship to ourselves and all of life. “To accept is the most powerful weapon. There is no weapon indeed for having the realization of truth that is more powerful than this: to accept oneself,” said Swami Prajnanpad (unpublished transcript). John Welwood’s article “Double Vision,” in *The Sacred Mirror*, refers to this great Indian master, now deceased, who recontextualized the psychological vision put forth by Sigmund Freud in the 1920s within the context of nonduality.

Swami Prajnanpad taught that enlightenment is not separate from anything else that is. Therefore, to abide in oneness one does not leave the world of duality to hang out in a transcendental universe of bliss and detachment, but instead he or she becomes “at one” with absolutely everything that arises, on every level, within oneself and outside oneself. In ceasing to separate oneself from anyone or anything, he or she is in complete union with everything, and thus his or her experience is nondual, or not two. “When you have taken everything, expanded everywhere,” he writes, “then you are one.”

(unpublished manuscript). And then:

Face, face, face what appears to be real, see its real nature. When you feel, it is real with you. No tricks of escaping: Have the courage to face the fact. Accept, accept, what is, never try to deny, to disown. Accept and be.

Learning to fully accept and become one with all aspects of experience—to become fully conscious of *everything*—is so vital that when somebody asked the late Tibetan Buddhist master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche what he did when he found himself in the hell realm, he said he tried to stay there as long as he could. To be able to stay awake, aware, and at-one-with all the dark, hidden, and unconscious aspects of oneself and of all experience is a great power and freedom. It is the power to live in truth, honesty, authenticity and integrity in any and all circumstances, including the transition into death.

The perspective that Swami Prajnanpad offers represents an evolution in psychology. To contextualize the dynamics of the human mind from the perspective of nondual experience is the beginning of the creation of an enlightened psychology. The psychology of mind becomes transformed into the psychology of truth. I believe that

modern psychology will reach its peak when it becomes one with spirituality. When it teaches us how to open up to, and become one with, all aspects of experience.

Walking the Talk

To fully embody and integrate spiritual wisdom, we literally have to turn toward everything—to learn to like, but also eventually to love—everything. In the most practical way, the call is to open to everything, especially that which hurts us and especially when we want to close. One of the primary purposes of spiritual life—far from our fantasies of the eternal Disneyland—is simply to learn to feel and to accept. To feel means to open towards all that is unconscious with us. This includes our denied suffering, as well as the great source of hidden love that dwells within us. As we deepen our capacity to dwell within the totality of our own embodied experience, we will feel *everything* more deeply—the “dark” as well as the “light”—and we will learn to be at one with everything. This is an aspiration of great magnitude, but practiced first on the laboratory of the body, which, since we are not separate from divinity, is a precious and sacred laboratory. This practice of learning to feel—which would seem so obvious, so basic—is also totally uncommon. Simply learning to feel, and then broadening that skill to heal the world.

Just prior to his enlightenment, Gautama Buddha approached the famous Bodhi Tree, circumambulated it seven times, and sat down to meditate, resolving that “even if my blood should run dry I will not leave this seat until truth has been realized!” Renouncing the needs of his body and resisting the lures of the demon Mara—who attempted to seduce him with all that is beautiful, alluring, and pleasant, as well as that

which is terrifying and monstrous—he stayed in place until the clarity of enlightenment emerged from within.

In contemporary times, extended tree-sitting is not what most people need to realize the truth of their own nature. Our task is different. We have already renounced the needs of our body and repressed its wisdom, but unlike the Buddha, we've done so for all the wrong reasons and through very different means, including overindulgence in superficial pleasure, comfort, and food, countless mental and emotional distractions, and a pervasive disassociation from the organic rhythms, cycles, and wisdom of our bodies. In this way, we have numbed ourselves and disconnected ourselves from our deeper nature. In contemporary times, when alienation and dissociation pervade, our own body *is* the sacred Bodhi Tree that calls to us, inviting us to dwell deeply within its sanctuary, to stand unwavering in the face of the demons of self-hatred, self-denial, self-abandonment, shame, unworthiness, helplessness, and neediness until the essence of our own embodiment reveals itself and we reinhabit our bodies as our rightful home. When this happens, our blood, rather than running dry, will run hot to boiling, our bones will be infused with strength, our skin will emanate a natural radiance, and a wellspring of unshakeable solidity and contentment will arise from our own source. The deep waters of our embodiment will swell and ebb with great life force, and some hint of the great Divinity will be revealed from within.

In its ultimate integration, the realization of nonduality should be no different than the realization of embodiment. If we are truly able to express our spirituality in such a way that it is no different from our daily experience, our bodies will eventually become the transmuted expression of our own integrated consciousness. The more deeply we

embody our ephemeral, relative reality, the more deeply we dwell in the absolute truth of our experience.

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