



Embodied Spirituality

By Mette Mouritsen, MD

What is embodied spirituality?

I guess there might be as many colorful descriptions as there are authors attempting to define not only the term but the actual state of being, as there is no single, widely agreed definition for the concept. Related to me, I was blessed with a rather sudden consciousness breakthrough four years ago that totally transformed my inner and outer life and continues to form and transform my life in many positive ways. I am a doctor and Integral psychotherapist and mindfulness instructor and most of all I am a human being. My intention in writing this essay is to reflect on my personal understanding of embodied spirituality—of living my spirit.

For me, embodied spirituality is a personal process of transformation and in this way very subjective; even though the feeling of connectedness might be the same. Maybe

this is why I can easily write the pronoun 'we' when discussing this topic. While I will do my best to avoid generalizations about spirituality, the topic itself raises many questions; some of which I don't know the answer and for others I offer my opinion.

To initiate a conversation with you, the reader, about embodied spirituality, I must first ask, what is spirit and what is spirituality? And then, within these questions, I ponder: where is it located?

I have a sense that spirit is energy, that exists without a specific location and form. I offer an example: When I am dancing intuitively and passionately to music, sometimes it is as if the tunes are moving my body or the body movement follows the rhythm by itself. Sometimes I make

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movements that I never dreamt my body was able to do. In these moments I wonder, who is embodying my body? Does the spirit of music embody me? Or am I embodied by the movement of an invisible dancer? Who am I in these moments? I am a body but there is also something more that is moving my body in unpredictable and constantly changing ways, and certainly also moving my feelings.

This example illustrates for me that I am much more than condensed energy in terms of my body-mind. Something makes me move. The composer, who wrote the music and the musicians who play have been working with their spirit to manifest the music—the elements of the music already existed, waited for them to bring it to form. Together this is moving the spirit of the dance. And in the dance it is not possible to distinguish the body-mind from the spirit; they are one.

For me, spirit is my unique consciousness in unification with the common consciousness. In my view, we are one consciousness; the separation is an illusion of the ego. The Ego—our personified spirit—needs a point of reference to separate itself from the surroundings to experience its existence; otherwise, there would just be one. And I ask, is that one, you or me or we or it? The fear of not existence creates and evolves the diversity of the Ego. The longing for connectedness is softening the ego.

We are one united spirit or consciousness, whatever you may prefer to name it. We just can't recognize it because of our ego. We see the world through our own

colored glasses, and as we cannot observe ourselves totally, we will never see the whole picture, the oneness. One cannot see oneness, one cannot find oneness. One can be oneness. So how can I write that I know we are one consciousness?

My experiences are that I often feel the same as most of my fellowmen in a given situation, we just have different ways to react to our feelings, which are manifested in the body-mind and our behaviour, our ego. So, common human feelings connect us, as well as they seemingly separate us. Another example: When I had this breakthrough, my experience was, an intense feeling of happiness and a feeling of connectedness with everyone and everything. When returning from this state, back to my ego, I felt anxiety, then rejected, then anger. Later I felt sorrow losing a dear friend (my ex-husband), and to some extent my old ego. In the end I felt a blissful forgiveness. Now I often feel gratitude.

My relatives' reaction was at first no reaction, simply ignorance. They were anxious, but they could not react. They felt powerlessness then anger and later sorrow losing a dear friend, wife, and mum because I had changed. We had many feelings, but we also shared the same feelings, at different times with different reactions. Fundamentally we had a fear of losing someone or something and at the same time we were longing for the connection to someone or something for seemingly different reasons. We came from a kind of symbiosis in our relationship and, in the split into two, the fear and the longing for connectedness started again.



Photo provided by Mette Mouritsen

In fact, the first split started many decades ago, when oneness split into plurality in the Big Bang and manifested our existence. Suddenly there was a point of reference because one became two and this created feelings as fear and longing. The fear of being eaten by the other and the longing for reconnection. Of course this is my interpretation of the creation and connectedness of the universe, and what triggered the Big Bang in the beginning? Anyway I invite you to be aware of and curious about the fear and the longing in its many disguises, and how it influences you and others. Although it is our mind that mostly trigger the feelings, it's the latter that may "run the show".

Another important common feeling that I think may be the same as the one we call love, is the feeling of happiness—to be and to bring happiness connects us and fills up the

inner empty space of longing for belonging. In genuine sharing of happiness, the connectedness arises.

Although having the same feelings are not the same as being one consciousness, they are important in connecting living beings. The fear and anger bind and connect us in the distancing, just like the longing connects us in the striving for closeness. Even though we might hate someone, we are still connected through the hate. Behind hate is always a longing for connectedness—to be seen and accepted as we are.

Another reason why I know we are connected in a common spirit lies in the many thoughts that arise in me every second, where do they come from? They are certainly not my own, even though some tend to stay in my mind. An example: I have not read a single book about embodied spirituality though I have been reading several books about

self-development. So where do these words that are flowing through my mind originate? Some have been discussed with other fellowmen, and some arise in me brought by other consciousnesses that I might never have met in this life. The other consciousnesses are open to the common reservoir of thoughts and words that are constantly drifting, transforming, and sometimes being expressed in amazing different ways and contexts.

Through my process, I experienced some out-of-the-blue understanding of the interconnectedness of the body-mind, and the power of the Now. Later on I discovered that there was already written books including works about this by Bruce Lipton, *The Biology of Belief*, especially in chapter 5- 6, how the mind is anatomically and physiologically connected with the body in the stress reaction. And when reading his book it opened my eyes to another old forgotten truth that we are not definitely determined by our genes. This confirmed the transformations in symptoms and diseases I had experienced in myself and my patients.

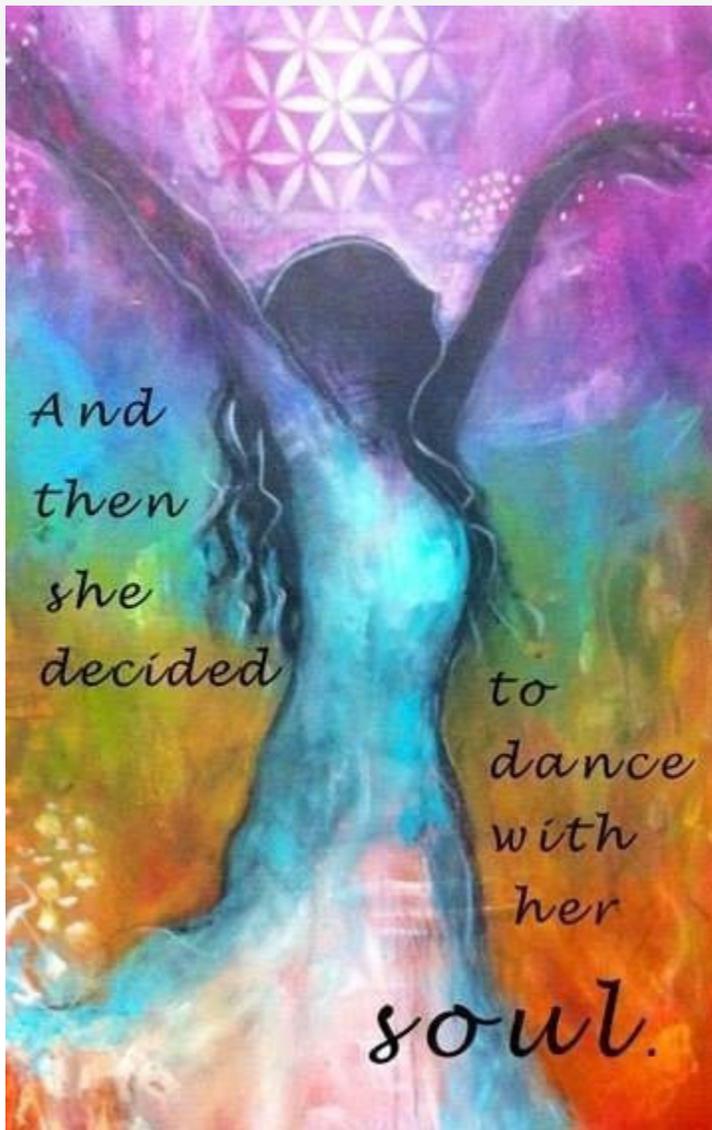
And Daniel Stern, in *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*, especially chapter 12, where he describes the power of the Now. I had experienced that I easily got re-traumatized in a present moment (the Now) even just by a briefly expression in a face, and that I as well was relived in a present moment (the Now) when someone acknowledge me for how I am now. Transformation is a lived experience in the Now. This wisdom came through the space of common consciousness. Before I was living in unconsciousness in a world of scientific beliefs where only matter, the form exists, and the formless has to be proven (observed) before it exists. And in my eager to understand the detail (the symptom) I had forgotten to look at the whole picture, the

interconnectedness of the body-mind-spirit.

Another concrete example is when I play Besser Wisser with my grown-up children (a game where the players pose questions to each other on different categories). Often I do not know the answer, especially when the question is about sport, history, music and geography. But sometimes I notice, when I am still and listen to my intuition, the right answer pops up. From where does the answer come? Surely not from my quiet children but from out-of-the-blue, the common reservoir of consciousness. This may happen for all of us.

If my consciousness changes it influences the ones I mostly relate to in present time. My relatives' consciousness is in turn connected with other consciousnesses and so it continues like ripples in the water, like a breath in the air. By the way, spirit in Latin means breath, so perhaps the spirit is moving our breath, and ends it as well in the final breath. I believe that spirit uses the body to become more conscious, even though the body is also consciousness but in a condensed form. The body has the capability to sense and feel, and by this the spirit acquires lived experiences, which I think might be necessary to transform energy and to keep the flow of consciousness.

The energy to be transformed is our thoughts and our feelings and even the body during the life-death circle. Just like ice is transformed into water, which is transformed into clouds, which disappears in the air or returns to water, which returns to ice. Consciousness exists in different forms in the ever-floating ocean of consciousness. In this definition of consciousness, time disappears. We are then pure presence. Through the decay in the materialistic world we define time as passing by. But the spirit inside us has no age. We may still feel young even



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though our body-mind grows old.

When something exists, the contrary polarity must exist because everything is manifested by its contradiction. We would not recognize the light if we didn't know the dark. We would not know of living if we didn't know the death. So who knows about the dis-embodied spirit? I guess we might ask people with near-death experiences, they describe among other a feeling of being pure awareness.

Embodied spirituality is for me then living my spirit in daily life on earth. Being all

that I am in every moment. When I am in the Now in whatever I am doing, the creativity rises. I am silent, listening to my intuition, and wisdom from other consciousnesses are likely to pop up. A feeling of being connected to something much bigger and wiser than me. As soon as I am elsewhere or not present, I am in a more or less contracted state in the body-mind (the stress response) and by this I minimize the ability of being connected with spirit and the common spirituality. To exemplify this I will return to the game Besser Wisser. If I am eager to win the game, I am alert and I am in the stress response—I am in a contracted state of my body-mind. I do not listen inward for the answer but outward for the recognition and then I do not open up for receiving the answer from out-of-the-blue. Playing, enjoying, and using the full creativity of life happens in the body-mind and spirit.

I believe that spirit is just as dependent on the body, as the other way around. The spirit grows and learns through our feelings, thoughts, behaviour and movements. Together they create a flow, a movement in time and space. Likewise with any other matter or condensed energy like an animal, a tree, a stone, a car. Like a puppet, the strings are just as much needed as the doll if the puppet is going to move, they just don't create a movement, they need the spirit of a puppeteer. And the puppeteer needs the spirit of a theatre and an audience even though he might enjoy the puppet-show alone for a while. The wood and the plastic, which the doll consists of, are still undergoing a transformative process, the process of decay. This is also a flow, a movement just as our body, feelings and thoughts transform, move and get moved. In this way everything and everyone are consciousness and materialised spirituality, just as everything and everyone is transformable, moving, and interconnected. In the end the doll, either made of plastic

or wood, origins from our earth. The transformation of oil into plastic into a doll is made by the spirit of a human. Some dolls have more spirit than others depending on how it is made- the intention and the spirit of the doll maker.

Thus, we all affect and are influenced by each other; we are beautifully interconnected. The whole human-animal-plant organism is being moved by spirit. Spirit is in us, around us, under us, and above us. Writing this brings deep love and caring feelings for everything around me including the keys on this keypad. Starting to care and become aware of all the small units we are surrounded with, as if they are embodied spirituality, this is for me the beginning of a return toward deep care and love for the earth and the universe. All these reflexions together with my own experiences are the reason for saying that I know we are one consciousness.



The body of mother earth fuses with the spirit of father sky and together they weave the movement of life as reflected in our eyes.

Mette Mouritsen, MD: I am a 53-year-old woman, learning through my life experiences and through other people's ways of being and acting in the world. I also learn through studying books, articles, ec. I specialize in General Medicine, and am certified as an Integral Psychotherapist. I am fortunate with three lovely grown-up children, the fruits of 21-years marriage with my ex-husband. I meditate twice daily. I love nature, to dance, to run to walk, to write and to laugh :)

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