

“I *am* my head, but *own* my body.” Thus, sadly, the body is reduced from *self* to *property*. The body becomes an object or a projection, in just the same way the shadow does. ... The body is only the most visible and sensible sign. ... The body is not a “deeper reality” than the ego, as many somatologists think, but the integration of the body-and-the-ego is indeed a deeper reality than either alone. On a deeper level, we fear to reclaim the body because it houses, in a particularly vivid and living form, strong emotions and feelings which are socially taboo. And ultimately, the body is avoided because it is the abode of death.

The ego is the seat of control, of manipulation, of voluntary and willed activity, and as a rule identifies itself only with voluntary processes. Yet the body is basically a well-organized collection of involuntary processes, of circulation, digestion, growth and differentiation, metabolism, and so on; all the spontaneous and involuntary actions that one feels that are somehow not-self and untrustable. In a sense, the ego feels trapped, a victim of the unruly capriciousness of its own body. It’s easy to see why in the eyes of many, flesh and sin are so terribly synonymous.

The ego feels trapped by the body’s vulnerability to pain. Pain, suffering, the intense sensitivity of living tissue and raw nerves – these understandably terrorize the ego, and it seeks to withdraw from the source of pain, to numb and freeze the body so as to reduce its vulnerability to painful vibrations. It can and does learn to withdraw awareness from the body, to globally deaden and desensitize it. But the body-deadening is accomplished only at a heavy price. For if it is true that the body is the source of pain, it is also true that it is the source of pleasure. No more suffering, and no more joy.

*No Boundary*, Ken Wilber (1979)