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The body in the process of constructing identity

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ABSTRACT

The main intention of my text is to describe the specific of the *somatic turn* of cultural studies and, to follow Chris Barker's proposition, "the desire to understand the ways in which the body becomes the object of shaping and disciplining by social and cultural forces – i.e. how the body acquires meaning in contemporary culture". The above problem provokes the consideration of the mutual relationships between the culture of late modernity and the category of identity (especially the body in the process of identity construction). The goal outlined in this way aims to present contexts and space for the manifestation of the issues of the body in contemporary culture. The aim of the proposed deliberations is to present the problem of the body from the perspective of reflexive identity (A. Giddens), constructivism perspective (Z. Melosik, A. Gromkowska, M. Bogunia-Borowska), in selected therapeutic systems (J. Kabat-Zinn, A. Lowen, S.&C. Block) and in the final section I present the category of the body in the integral approach to development (K. Wilber). Also, I shortly summarize my analysis and I point to the dangers of the presented approaches especially in the dominant instant culture practices.

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This article is dedicated to those who, like the authors quoted in it, are concerned about the state of Western culture and are looking for traces of the current crisis of our identity, manifested, among other things, by the helplessness of the inhabitants of the Western world in the face of the negative consequences of a beautiful, ad-

vanced civilization. Thus, it seems constructive nowadays to refer to the tradition of the East, from where the idea of mindfulness, an idea derived from the tradition of Buddhism, came to our civilizational circle in the 20th century. The effect of the meeting of the two cultures includes many interesting interactions between eastern and western mind-sets. In the text I would like to look at certain trends in the process of applying and transmitting the idea of mindfulness to Western rationality. Of course, this is just a small contribution to a deeper cultural analysis of this process. The text is also part of the current of research on the transformation and interaction of the two traditions.

The second revolution in psychology, i.e. the emergence of humanistic psychology, introduced new issues into the social discourse, including the wide range of health issues of the whole human personality, creativity as an existential category, a category of integral development, about which Ken Wilber, a world-famous philosopher and a transpersonal psychologist, has been writing about recently. With the postulate of humanistic psychologists to cover the broad spectrum of human consciousness and with the postulate of “realism”, the “positive” side of life has gained more attention. Many researchers are currently studying the psychological processes of what we call success or happiness in life. The above concepts were first mentioned in the writings of humanistic psychologists, such as Erich Fromm, Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and of the living researchers mainly Ken Wilber and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who are exploiting this side of human existence. These concepts have gradually paved the way to collective imagination and are now embodied in many media communications, and in instant culture they take the form of ready-made recipes for a successful life. Psychological knowledge has found a wide range of propagators, thus the market of experts supports and drives the development of these analytical studies.

Careful reading of canonical works in the field of cultural studies allows for some generalizations. According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, cultural studies become an area of consecutive *cultural turns*, around which the organisation of the discourse takes place and the author mentions subsequent *turns*, drawing up a cartography of cultural studies. And so she mentions as follows: *the interpretive turn, performative turn, reflexive/literary turn, postcolonial turn, translational turn, spatial turn, iconic turn* (D. Bachmann-Medick 2012). Chris Barker in his work *Cultural Studies. The theory and practice* also mentions the *somatic turn* of cultural studies. The intention of this term is the “desire to understand how the body becomes an object of shaping and disciplining by social and cultural forces, i.e. how the body acquires meaning in contemporary culture”(Barker 2005, p. 56).

The subject of the analysis in this sketch will be to bring closer the specificity of the *somatic turn* while showing a few important contexts around which contemporary reflection revolves in order to develop the general intention of *how the body acquires meaning in contemporary culture*. The problem posed in the title provokes the consideration on mutual relations between the culture of late modernity and identity (including the body in the process of constructing identity). As Chris Barker, already mentioned in the introduction, notes: "Observing the development of disciplinary power discourses throughout history, one can locate particular types of "self regimes" in specific historical and cultural circumstances. This means that different types of subjects are a consequence of different historical and social formations". (Barker 2005, p.262). The problem outlined in this way aims to show subtle shades of meaning from the field of research on the identity of the instant epoch. I would like to point out that my work will not be an exhaustive presentation of the issue, but an attempt to outline the problems emerging from the field of research presented in such a way. The aim of this text is to present contexts and show several significant discourses in reflections on the presence of the body in contemporary culture. First of all, I propose to draw and juxtapose the two dominant perspectives in the study of carnality. Starting with Anthon Giddens's reflection on the reflective identity and the approach to carnality within this concept, I intend to bring closer the way in which the body is problematized in the constructivist paradigm current and, secondly, I will present the concept and the way in which the body is conceptualized in an integral approach. I do not hide the fact that constructivist proposals juxtaposed with the integral approach reveal the author's conviction of the benefits of this kind of oppositional perspective and the weakness, the trap of the cultural constructivism approach. Referring to representatives of various social studies, I will try to summarize the dominant tendencies of instant culture through the category of carnality. In the following part of the sketch I will present Ken Wilber's views on "integral life practice" as part of his integral approach to development, as well as the views of Jon Kabat-Zinn, a relentless promoter of mindfulness in stress and depression therapy, builder of (MBSR) and (MBCT) systems. These aspects of "discovering mindfulness", present in Western practices, are an important inspiration in the above mentioned fields of social life, a foreshadowing of the alternative initiated by the revolution in humanistic psychology. The subject of analysis in this study is the system of integral philosophy and the figure of Ken Wilber, a true pioneer in contemporary research on the nature of spiritual development, who presents a revolutionary approach to enriching development based on the AQAL matrix. I have taken up these topics several times in my earlier writings, but I would like to present the pedagogical community with the in-

tegral approach of Ken Wilber, whose writings still require discussion, especially that the approach presented in the idea of “integral life practice” provides an opportunity for a balanced, synergic personal development, not only of educators, but also of their charges aiming to fulfil the demands of humanistic psychology, which Ken Wilber describes as the “psychology of human potential”.

The Body in the Reflective Identity Project

In the insightful study “Modernity and identity. ‘Me’ and the society in the era of late modernity”, Anthony Giddens convincingly develops the paradigm of post-modern identity in a broad plan of cultural transformation. The background for an in-depth analysis of identity is the late modern global society. As Giddens observes, the radical distinctiveness of modern society is primarily influenced by its unprecedented dynamism. He writes: “The modern world ‘is escaping’: not only is the pace of change incomparably faster than in the case of any previous system, but also the extent and radical influence that they have on the existing social practices and behaviours is unprecedented” (Giddens 2006, p.23). Giddens distinguishes three elements that make up this phenomenon: first, the separation of time and space; second, the eradication of social institutions; and third, reflectiveness. All of them will influence the emergence of a new interpretation of the concept of identity. The last two factors are worth a brief discussion. Giddens distinguishes two types of uprooting mechanisms, namely: symbolic means and expert systems, which he generally calls abstract systems. Symbolic means are means of exchange with a normalised value, e.g. money. Expert systems, on the other hand, are forms of technical expertise that embrace all areas of modern social life; and now also social relations and personality problems. As he notes: “The doctor, counsellor and therapist are just as important for expert systems of modernity as the scientist, technician or engineer” (ibid., p.27). The key concept of the functioning of expert systems at the intersection with the social life of individuals is trust, which “supports the limited technical knowledge that most people have about the codified information that routinely affects their lives” (ibid., p.28). Expert systems, as uprooting mechanisms, “tear social life away from patterns and established practices” (ibid., p.29). The third element of the dynamism of modern institutions is reflectiveness, which means that “the greater part of social activity and material attitude towards nature is systematically reviewed due to newly acquired information or knowledge” (ibid., p.29). Typical modern reflectiveness allows to revise knowledge in the face of new discoveries and theories, at the same time being a source of

existential anxiety for people in the late modern era. According to Giddens, the uprooting effect of expert systems is the “devaluation of skills in many aspects of social life” (ibid., p.31).

In the post-traditional order (a different term for late modern society), identity becomes a reflexive project. Abstract systems turn out to be important, not only for the “institutional order of modernity, but also for the formation and continuity of identity” (ibid., p.48). The most significant connection between abstract systems and the project of reflexive identity is visible in the development of new forms of therapy and counselling.

From the general statement about identity as a reflexive project, Giddens derives the following features of identity:

- identity is a reflexive project for which the individual is responsible (we are not who we are, but who we will turn ourselves into);
- the “I” creates a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future, which is coherent and results from the cognitive awareness of different phases of the course of life;
- the reflectiveness of identity is continuous and all-encompassing and consists in a constant return to the question: “How can I use this moment to change?”;
- identity as a coherent whole presupposes narration (the narration of the self becomes public); keeping a diary and working through one’s autobiography are the main recommendations to help maintain an integrated sense of self;
- self-fulfilment presupposes control over time as a way of controlling a given unit of life;
- the reflectiveness of identity extends to the body;
- self-realization is understood as a balance between opportunity and risk; the world is filled with the possible, in the sense of experimental games that an individual can now begin, ways of being and acting;
- the moral axis of self-fulfilment is authenticity in “being honest with oneself”;
- the course of life is seen as a series of “transitions”;
- the development of the self is self-evident; integrated identity, the achievement of the authentic self, results from the integration of life experiences in the narrative of one’s own development” (ibid., pp.105-111).

The late modern existential landscape puts man in a situation of having to choose between various possibilities of creating identity and practices of self-fulfilment, but at the same time it does not provide support on which of them should be chosen. According to Giddens, the concept of lifestyle comes to the aid, which “can

be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices that an individual undertakes, not only because they are useful, but also because they give material shape to individual identity narratives” (ibid., p.113).

As Giddens notes: “the more post-traditional is the order in which the individual moves, the more the lifestyle concerns the very core of identity, its shaping and transformation” (ibid., p.113). The essence of the lifestyle is to create a comprehensive and ordered pattern of everyday attitudes and habits, important from the point of view of creating a sense of ontological security. Apart from the pluralization of lifestyles in the late modern era, the concept of life plans appears, which, according to Giddens are “ the content of a reflectively organized trajectory of identity” (ibid., p.118).

In late modern conditions, as Giddens notes, “the identity narrative within the reflective project is inherently fragile. Resignation from a specific identity may provide certain psychological benefits, but it is certainly a burden as well. The individual is forced to create and rebuild his or her own identity due to the changing experiences of everyday life and the tendency of modern institutions to fragment the identity of the individual” (ibid., p.254).

Finally, it is time to present Giddens’s collected analyses on the role and meaning of the body in a reflective identity project. As Giddens notes, the body is “a system of action, a source of practice whose active involvement in everyday interactions is necessary to maintain a coherent sense of identity” (Ibid., p.137). According to Giddens, this allows us to distinguish the basic aspects of carnality: the appearance of the body, way of being, the sensuality of the body, bodily regimes. The era of late modernity assumes that the social actor plays an active role in the process of constructing identity. This is also visible when referring to the body. As Giddens observes:

“The principle of active identity construction also applies to the body. The regimes to which the body is subjected, directly related to the sensuality patterns, are the basic mechanism of cultivation, or even creation of the body, on which the institutional reflectiveness of modernity focuses” (Giddens 2006, p. 139). While discussing the issue of carnality, Giddens asks a basic question: “How to understand the claim that the body has become a part of the reflectiveness of modernity?” (ibid., p.142). The answer is as follows: “In the era of developed modernity, the regimes to which the body is subjected, and the organization of sensual experience are the subject of constant reflective attention due to the multitude of possible choices. Both planning and the choice of a lifestyle are connected (in principle) with subjecting the body to certain regimes” (ibid., p.142). Giddens links this phenomenon with the problem of the occurrence of often contradictory programs of

“body exercises” contained in the handbooks which we use in relation to ourselves, but as he says: “we are becoming responsible for the project concerning our own body, (...), in a sense we are forced to design it, as the social conditions in which we live are becoming more and more post-traditional” (ibid. p. 142).

The body in the perspective of constructivism

As Zbyszko Melosik writes, citing Zygmunt Bauman: “For a long time social sciences tried to learn as much as possible – to use the phrase of Z. Bauman – ‘about man woven from the yarn of thoughts and feelings: about the incorporeal man.’ The body remained the domain of biologists, as if it had not been shaped in any way by society and sensitive to its transformation” (Melosik 2010, p.9). However, Melosik believes that the problem of carnality can be a challenge for cultural analysts, because “the individual’s experience is to a large extent carnal. The social history of man is also the history of his body, and the history of the body in turn has its social dimensions” (ibid., p.9). Melosik sees the problems of the body as closely related to the categories of femininity, masculinity and sexuality. As he argues, post-modern times question the essential and natural approaches to understanding carnality. Along with questioning the essential interpretation of humanity, postmodernity recognizes that “its (human – my J.M.) scope is always defined by social practices describing what it means to be human” (ibid., p. 10). According to this opinion, Melosik states: “The biological woman and biological man become social representatives of the sexes if they exemplify the social (time-varying and contradictory) meanings that determine femininity and masculinity in a given society” (ibid., p. 11). As Melosik observes, the body becomes a text in which various configurations of socially constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity are inscribed” (ibid., p.11). The general conclusion concerning the body in this perspective can be formulated as follows: “The reading of the social meanings of the body, the shapes and contours, colours and various symbols inscribed in them, takes place constantly in everyday life. In contemporary culture three various discourses of the body are (re)presented, which fight to obtain the status of “universal body” (ideal or “binding”, which everyone should embody)” (ibid., p.11).

As Melosik notes, and this conviction should be treated as a general attitude of social constructivist researchers: “There is no ‘natural’ body – it is always defined by cultural and social processes. In the course of these processes ‘real’ knowledge about the body is (re)constructed. The social pressure exerted on individuals causes this knowledge to be accepted and embodied in the bodies. Knowledge about

what the body should be like (to be admired and desired, and above all simply 'normal') has a normative and disciplinary character" (Melosik 2010, p. 13).

Agnieszka Gromkowska in her text *A Woman in the Victorian Era: social construction of body and identity* (Gromkowska 2000) takes a similar position. As she observes: "Women and femininity are historical, social and cultural constructs. A woman is a woman in the biological or physiological sense (she is born as a woman), but it is only socialization that makes her *become* a woman understood as a social unit. She is *constructed* through the meanings of femininity that are valid in a given epoch. If she accepts them and embodies them in an appropriate way, then her femininity is considered to be socially adequate" (Gromkowska 2000, p.59). I will recall Melosik once again when he writes: "The success of an individual in becoming a woman or a man also depends on whether his genetic predispositions overlap with social expectations (this can be clearly seen in the example of the current 'ideal of a slim body' of a woman, which is achieved effortlessly only by a few of them; many women hopelessly fight against their own biology in order to achieve the ideal)" (Melosik 2010, p. 11). At this point it is worth quoting Bauer:

"The subject is entangled in the danger of being 'drawn in' by the whirlwind of social influences, requirements and imposed identity" (Bauer 2004, p.13).

A special case of the constructivist approach to the issue of the body is the culture of extreme metamorphoses described by Małgorzata Bogunia-Borowska in the text *Extreme metamorphoses – a project of an ideal man and perfect life in the postmodern world* (Bogunia-Borowska 2006). The author associates this movement with an attitude typical for consumer culture related to creativity, competitiveness, individualism, pleasure and youth (Bogunia-Borowska 2006, p.69). As Małgorzata Bogunia-Borowska writes: "Consumer culture is becoming more and more popular, which means that individuals almost automatically consider a set of features to be the only valid and appropriate one. As a consequence, we can assume that we have entered the next, very sophisticated stage of development of consumer culture. This phase of cultural and social transformation is so clear and visible that it can be described as a separate phenomenon, expressed in important processes concerning both individuals and their environment, in everyday life in many of its manifestations. I propose that we call it a ***culture of extreme metamorphoses or a culture of makeover***" (ibid., p. 69). What distinguishes the culture of extreme metamorphoses?

The author describes its specificity in the following way: "The culture of metamorphoses consists in radical, courageous and even risky transformations of very different spheres and dimensions of human existence" (ibid., p. 69), and "the idea

of *makeover* began with changes in the visual aspects of the body. It now covers all visual and aesthetic forms of human life” (ibid., p. 71). The author broadly discusses the features of the culture of metamorphoses. We are interested in its aspect related to the idea of improvement and education and the culture of experts and specialists. As she observes: “The culture of metamorphoses is a culture of improvement, but not self-improvement, but improvement with the help of others who know how to achieve it in the shortest possible time” (ibid., p.71). As it results, the culture of metamorphoses can be treated as an archetypal incarnation of instant culture, after all, one of its features is the realization of human self-fulfilment through the culture of experts and various specialists in change and development, as well as the immediate results of such actions.

The author of the cited text notes that: “The importance of specialists, i.e. dieticians, plastic surgeons, dentists, orthodontists, make-up artists, stylists, architects, fitness coaches, decorators, gardeners, party organizers, fashion creators, psychologists, is enormous, because without their help it would not be possible to carry out a radical metamorphosis in a short time (ibid., p.70).

The basic persuasive force in strengthening the impact on rapid transformation may be advertising, which provides individuals with a way to be trendy, but the question remains “whether surrendering to the will and vision of other people, even if they consider themselves experts in culture, is a way to the authentic and real development of the individual in society” (ibid., p. 73). The author sees this as a great threat to the loss of freedom when she writes: “This annexation of human identity and the creation of a perfect man and his ideal life leads to the exercise of power over an individual. Taking away the possibility of creating one’s own identity, in reality we produce an artificial creation, which becomes a clone of similar ‘products’ of expert fantasy’ (ibid., p. 75).

The body in an integral perspective – introduction.

Of course, one can agree with Ken Wilber, who calls postmodernity the culture of the flat earth, according to which all considerations referring to values have been forgotten, and it is difficult to talk about values other than hedonistic ones in our times. This led to the degradation of good manners and the lowering of moral standards, the blurring of borders and the disappearance of the sense of sacrum, the loss of morality and the loss of humanity. In short: the brutalisation and barbarity of culture. I am sure, however, that not everyone has come to terms with this position.

In contemporary culture, however, there is a strong belief, as well as practices undermining the tendencies outlined above. This is only a signal, but in the last two decades we have observed a kind of renaissance of certain important humanistic issues. At present, there are many schools of thought which going against the common truths retain the remnants of humanism. In psychology, for example, the concept of emotional intelligence has emerged, in which one can see a return to forgotten, renounced humanistic content.

As John Lechte points out in his work *Panorama of contemporary humanistic thought. From structuralism to postmodernism*: “One can argue, of course, what should be included in the philosophical canon (of the West today), but there is no doubt that this canon still has a great influence on us” (Lechte 1998). Maps adapted to the old world have collapsed, authorities seem to be at risk, our identities have become more complex. Contemporary culture is affected by the disease of permanent crisis. The social world has become so complicated that values fundamental for our culture have been threatened with annihilation. Radical criticism of the foundations of our existence in the collective dimension has resulted in unrestrained scepticism. It has crept into the dimension of individual life, causing havoc in the ethical layer. Referring to universal values has become unfashionable, and the life of an ordinary participant of the cultural game is underlined by nihilism. Thus, an original psychological thought appeared in the climate of change, with this background, inscribing itself into the rich tradition of European counter-culture. At the outset, humanistic psychology found itself in a rather unfavourable cultural environment, as it seemed that with the collapse of the foundations of our cultural identity, thinking about values has been abandoned. Humanistic psychology, accused by many of naivety or idealism, may have influenced the survival of basic human values, such as the sense of life, responsibility and spiritual freedom. It seems that in such a cultural milieu this is an undertaking of exceptional intellectual courage. Spiritual issues want to be present in public discourse, because in the instant era the distinction between the public and private disappears. The barren culture of the flat earth (Wilber) demands the strengthening of axiological reflection in order to give satisfaction to man’s aspiration to full, integral development.

The intention of the integral project is to reach the displaced, omitted, unknown content, while at the same time showing trends, cultural movements as components of immeasurable social revival on the spiritual market. The implantation of Buddhism on the western ground causes many surprising changes in human consciousness, also a shift in social discourse. This is evidenced, for example, by the institution of “integral life practices” derived from the achievements of the

American thinker – Ken Wilber. I will repeat, however, that the task of engaged criticism is to pose questions in such a way as to overcome the impasse in which contemporary humanities has found themselves after a period of exuberant doubt. Yes, one can agree with the diagnosis of postmodern culture by Ken Wilber, who calls postmodernity the culture of the flat earth (no depth; only the surface), which, relatively speaking, is not conducive to consideration of values (i.e. hierarchies or levels of reality), and in the momentum of adiphoric tendencies (Bauman 1996) it sterilizes it, wreaking ethical havoc among its inhabitants, who move around without an internal compass and painfully experience the fall of faith in the sense of life (Giddens 2006).

This is the pessimistic perspective of postmodernism, where the dominant mood among scholars of the world of culture is doubt in the sense of creating structures and the ultimate overcoming of the breakdown of the scientific discourse. It may also seem that any attempts to abandon the dominant idiom of postmodern narration in philosophy are doomed to fail, or are accused of creating new logocentric and imperial frameworks for our thinking. It also seems that any proposal going beyond the above-mentioned dilemmas of postmodern philosophy of culture has no chance in a world of discourse fragmented into bundles, incoherent small narratives. Meanwhile, for at least a dozen years now, there has been the integral vision of Ken Wilber, an American transpersonal psychologist and philosopher.

Post-modern culture, i.e. the last few decades of the 20th century, have been an era of the disappearance of all universal values. Nowadays, profit has become the dominant driving force for people. Values other than hedonistic ones have been forgotten. Cultural Disneyland offers fun as a basic form of participation in the cultural game. Accelerating and mixing everything at the world stand is a sign of our times. Present times are not conducive to deeper reflection, superficial reception and the possibility of unlimited access to the offers of this instant culture dominate. We are guided by the idea of receiving everything immediately and in unlimited number. It is becoming more and more difficult to maintain balance and accuracy of choice in such conditions. When anything goes, there are no priorities in life. Post-modern times have been overwhelmingly ambivalent. Uncertainty and the collapse of everything that is obvious means a culture of constant change and fluidity. It is becoming more and more difficult to preserve emotional health and an integrated life attitude in times of constant overwork. It seems that rivalry has replaced human solidarity. The rich live in wealth and the poor in poverty. The world has disintegrated into local zones: on the one hand, a global civilisation has already emerged (e.g. the Internet), on the other

hand, there is a return to local traditions. It seems that post-modern times are not conducive to moral reflection.

Summing up these dispersed reflections on the humanism of the postmodern era, I would like to make a brief generalization. What is the spirituality of man at the beginning of the 21st century, an average inhabitant of the global village? In the time of globalization, our spirituality has undergone enormous transformations. For the first time in history, the East has met the West. Both traditions influence each other. The pragmatic civilization of the West has met the esoteric East. Today we have access to many resources, all kinds of spiritual resources. All the ideas, present on the spiritual market, have been circulated around the world. Ideas and practices, which for centuries have been available only to selected people, have appeared in the West. In the East, on the other hand, the scientific tradition of the West has become established. This is definitely a phenomenon of the 20th century. Westerners today are looking for inspiration to the East. Eastern ideas have already permeated the daily discourse of Western man. It is enough to open any illustrated magazine or watch TV! Today we should be TRENDY, and the concepts or ideas of these indigenous traditions have already entered everyday social conversations. The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of New Age on the spiritual market. The Age of Aquarius is an era of mixing of traditions and practices previously attributed and guarded by local communities. In the era of new media, all pre-existing spiritual practices have become a global good and commodity. Nothing that expresses human longing for spiritual development is a mystery anymore.

Thus, human spirituality, shortly after the millennium breakthrough, does not have a uniform face. However, it is important to draw on tradition so that the world can develop harmoniously. Certain spiritual trends will soon pass, but it is important to preserve the traditions of all indigenous spiritual practices.

The issue of the body in selected therapeutic systems

Issues concerning the body have been also included in psychotherapeutic trends, finding an excellent chance for articulation. The problem of mutual relations between the body and mind is becoming more and more common in the Western world. Thus, many therapeutic systems have appeared, for which the presence of the body and carnality is the basis for a truly integrated (not reductionist) model of identity.

According to Alexander Lowen, a healthy identity is completely hidden in the "I" of the body. Lowen has devoted a lot of his work (more importantly, recently

also published in Poland) arguing for the need to listen to the needs of the body, which is our natural equipment, whereas ignoring or suppressing the body may lead to serious identity disorders. This subject found its meaning in the title of one of Lowen's works, namely *The Betrayal of the Body*. Lowen describes the processes of the lack of subjective identification with one's own body, which leads directly to a pathological model of functioning and a disturbed sense of identity. Of course, the therapeutic contexts of *carnality* that I am discussing are an area of intensive research undertaken within many different therapeutic systems, but I would like to present only two of them as a contribution to a more comprehensive approach to the problem.

For many of us, the book *The Conscious Way through Depression* can turn out to be an unprecedented encounter with mindfulness practiced on the meditation path. Although the authors have addressed the increasingly alarming social problem of depression, which ruins the lives of many people, the message of this work is not limited solely to the anatomy of depression. Based on the experience of meditation (especially mindfulness), they offer those who seek, and who are often crushed by various life events or burdened with excessive stress of life, an unprecedented opportunity to come across a complete alternative to the dominant therapeutic practices. The MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) proposal, based on mindfulness training and cognitive therapy achievements, is an exploratory work, and for many readers it will certainly prove to be a refuge of hope in a world of excessive risk. The therapeutic program contained therein refers directly to the experiences of the stress reduction clinic based on mindfulness, founded in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The authors propose an 8-week mindfulness training, during which the therapy participants develop their own style of mindfulness training. Many of the meditation exercises proposed are aimed at rooting consciousness in the mode of being, i.e. exceeding the mode of action, which, as it turns out, is ineffective in preventing the destructive effects of certain life events. The discovery of mindfulness is, on the one hand, an attempt to share the beneficial experience gained from the practice of mindfulness and at the same time to discover the importance of mindfulness as a new lifestyle in the process of personal transformation and self-discovery. Thus, this proposal is an element of typical contemporary culture which is increasingly interested in the issue of personal development, and therapeutic culture gains a humanistic face thanks to this proposal. Of course, there is a wide range of developmental experiments, one can also mention Ken Wilber's idea of *integral life practice*.

Returning to the idea of mindfulness therapy, it is based on the achievements of cognitive psychology, which discovered the importance of feedback between

the mind and the body. That is why a lot of space is devoted here to showing and practicing mindfulness, including that of the body, and reaching out to the wisdom of the experience inscribed in the body. For desperate people who fail to find the solution to their problems through mere thinking, the opening of the *body's gate* and physical sensations can have a liberating effect. Another aspect is the importance of emotions in healthy functioning. Thanks to the practice of mindfulness, we discover the body as a source of wisdom and the importance of emotions after the healing process. First of all, we learn non-judgmental consciousness and psychological culture and insight into the nature of thinking and feeling. Thus, the practice of mindfulness outlined in the MBCT project is also a rediscovery of the possibilities inherent in our natural potential of humanity. This is certainly an optimistic proposal, as evidenced by data from research on the decreasing risk of recurrence of depression in patients after the mindfulness course.

Mindfulness training also teaches a new attitude, which constitutes an important educational value of this model. If we fail to take risks, we actually deprive ourselves of the possibility to experience change and the knowledge and feeling of growing and learning through experiencing life. Activity is most important, as well as establishing contact with one's self in the transformation process. How can we develop when we are passive and stuck in repetitive, schematic behaviours?

Another therapeutic system in which the authors refer to the body is the MBB (mind body bridging) concept developed by Stanley and Carolyn Block. The authors of this model base their concept on the techniques of tuning and mapping the mind and body. According to the authors of the tuning technique, the identity system makes us feel that we are a separate entity and is responsible for the loss of contact with the Source. As they observe: "When the identity system is overactive, it limits our consciousness, causes fear, destroys the harmony and balance of mind and body" (Block, Block, 2011, p.26). According to the authors "the basis for the existence of an identity system is a particular type of thought called requirements" (ibid., p.27). According to the authors of the tuning method, "When you put the identity system at rest, i.e. when you recognize the requirements and internal narratives and you do not allow them to lead you, your natural and free ego will come to the fore" (ibid., p.33). As they further note: "The system does not allow you to experience or express who you really are" (ibid., p. 35). The system of identity makes us numb. The authors recall the words of one of the participants of an MBB workshop: "I live my life [...], but I do not experience the fullness of my true self, because my identity system has detached me from my body, suppressed my senses. It has cut me off from who I really am" (ibid., p. 36). Tuning makes us function in a natural way. It consists of two steps: first, the practice of being conscious, which

puts the identity system in a state of rest. As they explain “by being conscious we return to the present and become aware of images, sounds, physical sensations and flowing thoughts [...] Being conscious of the identity system is all we need to put it in a state of rest” (ibid., p. 39); secondly, this stage of tuning is about “befriending the identity system, which means recognizing and understanding its requirements and how they limit our life” (ibid., p. 39). The central point of the tuning method is the mind mapping procedure. Mapping allows us to locate our own system of identity, and if we “pull the system of identity to the light of day, embrace it with our consciousness, we will be able to go beyond our limiting thoughts and get a broader perspective” (ibid., p.49). What is equally important, the system of identity also separates us from the body. The authors of the proposed therapeutic model recommend simple exercises to regain contact with the body.

The body in an integral perspective.

The aim of this text is also to present the figure of Ken Wilber, an American writer, psychologist and transpersonal philosopher to a wider audience. Ken Wilber is a world-famous writer, one of the pioneers and creator of an original approach to personal development and a systemic approach to the transformation of Western culture to an integral stage. Author of many works on spirituality, integral psychology and creator of an inspiring model of personal development in the form of integral life practice. Ken Wilber is one of the most outstanding contemporary propagators of the idea of rapprochement between East and West. Together with another American Buddhist adept, Jon Kabat-Zinn, he is one of the most outstanding representatives and authorities who has introduced the ideas of mindfulness and meditation experiences to the mainstream of modern psychology and psychotherapy. Although Wilber is an authority in matters of spiritual development, he is not a well-known author in Poland, overlooked in social sciences research until very recently. He himself organized thriving centres developing integral philosophy called integral institutes. Another problem is the reception of his work, which is difficult for researchers of his texts, not to mention ordinary readers, not only because of the volume of his works, but above all because of the complexity of the issues he raises. Therefore, it seems necessary to introduce the topic of integral philosophy, the complexity and genesis of the terminology used by Wilber, as well as to indicate the significance and topicality of his work on a discursive map of cultural and anthropological research. Admittedly, there are some papers discussing Wilber’s work, a good example of which is the work by Marzanna Kie-

lar, which explores the educational potential of Wilber's thought, but it is worth stressing that the issues of integral development which seal Wilber's achievements in the field of personal evolution and cultural breakthrough are not particularly popular. It is extremely important to introduce Wilber's reflections on the issue of integral development and, above all, on the *Integral Life Practice*, which is not yet known to the Polish audience. In some of my recent sketches I refer to the idea of integral development, but I realize that it requires a more detailed presentation, so that the idea, which developed from the personal meditation practice of Wilber and a group of propagators, could be applied in a world of our social struggle, enriching the perspective of personal development with an important point of reference. I think that Ken Wilber, along with Jon Kabat-Zinn, is one of the most interesting authors inspired by the thoughts of the East. Of course, one can also mention Daniel Goleman's creative approach to emotional intelligence research, as he also explores meditation experiences. I would like to treat this text as an introduction to the presentation of Ken Wilber's standpoint and a review of literature on the creative use of meditation experiences by Western researchers.

Wilber's writings have played an invaluable role in the absorption of perpetual philosophy. It is no coincidence that Wilber is one of the propagators of transpersonal psychology, i.e. a field of thought which considers the issues related to broadly understood spirituality. Its popularity is to some extent based on the formation of a special type of recipient of spirituality in the New Age era, in which the authors compete in presenting spirituality in many different ways. He considers himself to be a pandita, i.e. a teacher who does not have students – it is the position of a modest outsider. Wilber's writing is based on the mission to synthesize two cultures: Eastern and Western, so that in the mature form of the vision of an integral culture of care, it does not lose anything from the achievements of each of the cultures. We cannot agree to the West ignoring the achievements of meditation, just as we cannot agree to the East ignoring the achievements of science. Wilber wants to build a synthesis in such a way as to satisfy everyone in his or her own domain. Modern spirituality cannot do without the teachings of Buddha, as well as Freud. The works published so far (this refers to the Polish translations of his works) prove how difficult this task is, but at the same time show the precision and fluency in dealing with topics from each of the aforementioned domains of knowledge. Each of his books presents a new context in taming the confusing paths of the spirit. This extremely prolific writer skilfully presents and assimilates his own integral position in his writing.

As I have already mentioned, the main driving force behind his writing is the desire to systematize the achievements in the field of research on con-

sciousness. In the Western tradition this role is reserved for psychologists or psychotherapists. Ken Wilber does not have any psychological education, but his achievements match those of such theoreticians and visionaries as Freud himself. Wilber's writings captivate with their simplicity and clarity of insight into the most complicated issues of consciousness. From the very beginning of his work, one can see great courage in overcoming the dominant ways of discourse on this phenomenon. As it turns out, simplicity and finesse go hand in hand with excellent theoretical skills.

Ken Wilber may have a well-deserved fame in America, where each of his books is a great event, but in Poland, despite the published books, he remains poorly known. This is mainly due to Wilber's rather unusual location in the tradition of contemporary thought, on the one hand, and the fact that integral thought forces his readers to take up their own position on the vast spiritual issues of our times.

This sketch is also intended to provide an answer to the question whether an integral philosophy of culture will meet the challenge of ideological and theoretical background for the theory of education. I would like to try to translate the language of the Ken Wilber, the creator of the integral model, into the language of today's educational debates. I also think that education practitioners can benefit greatly from the debates taking place in America, which gave rise to the idea of integral education. This will not be an easy task, as the social rooting of integral movement in Poland is yet unclear. In his work *Integral Theory of Everything* (2006), Ken Wilber argues that it is possible to create integral education, as well as integral medicine or integral ecology and even politics. And it is in the resilient integral institutes in America that the creation of an integral movement in education becomes a challenge for practitioners. As I noticed earlier, science has become less serious in postmodernity (Lyotard 1997) and it seems today that all "great narratives" have no *raison d'être*. The same applies to integral philosophy, which for several years now has been demanding a "voice" and "full-fledged" participation in the debate on building an alternative to the exhaustive mission of the first level school. The crisis of legitimacy and representation of knowledge allows Denzin and Lincoln (2009) not to record the emergence of an alternative in the form of the integral movement, when presenting dominant social discourses. Thus, the chance and possibility of rooting Ken Wilber's social integral philosophy is rather complicated. What is necessary is a promotional campaign and a strengthening of the message of the creator of *Integral Psychology* (2002). It seems, however, that a significant contribution to the development of the theoretical foundations for integral education may be the concept of integral development, and especially the idea of

integral life practice as a vehicle for personal development and growing upwards along the spiral of development addressed to sensitive and independent people.

According to Wilber, apart from the presented elements of integral theory, an equally important element is the effective integral practice, which enables the evolution of individual consciousness to an integral level, as well as the accomplishment of a great cultural transformation to a truly integral culture. There is also room for the presentation of Wilber's views on the nature of integral development and the evolution of his views on the practices that make this great transformation possible. The following part of the text aims to indicate the rightful place of the concept of the *Integral Life Practice* as a model of practice and art of integral living – this is Wilber's valuable contribution to the genealogy of the development of Western techniques.

Starting with his work *One Flavour* (1999), Wilber presents his thoughts on practices that support the evolution of consciousness to an integral level, which he calls transformational practices. In a later paper *The Integral Theory of Everything*, Wilber uses the term integral transforming practice. And since *The Integral Vision* (2007), published in 2007, Wilber has used the term integral life practice. In 2008, Wilber, together with other authors, published the work *Integral Life Practice*, entirely devoted to the art of integral living.

The concept of integral development is a creative approach to human development, giving justice to all the dimensions of human existence that are important for sustainable and coherent development. It is a vision combining coherent development in many fields or in many aspects at the same time. The idea of integral development is based on the model of work on the overall plan of human life, in the dimension of the self, culture and nature.

It also expresses confidence in the human potential for the creation of one's own integral life practice, which must be based on one's own individual project and activities consistent with this unique life perspective. There is always an open field for exploration and solutions consistent with the activities practiced in life, and the role of an integral view is to combine these activities into a well thought-out model, being as integral as possible. So if you practice meditation, integral development will show you an additional field of activity in the field of culture and nature.

As Wilber observes in the *Integral Theory of Everything*: “The basic idea of integral transformational practice is simple: the more aspects of our being we practice at the same time, the more likely the transformation is. In other words, IPT should cover “all quadrants, all levels” (Wilber, 2006, pp. 214-215). He then states: “Speaking of ‘all levels,’ I mean waves of existence: from matter through body, mind, soul to spirit; ‘all quadrants’ refer to the ‘I,’ ‘we,’ ‘it’ dimension (in other words to the self,

culture and nature; art, moral issues and science; first, second and third person). Thus, practicing “all quadrants, all levels” includes the exercise of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual waves in the self, culture and nature” (ibid., p.215).

The aim of Integral Life Practice is to become aware of the full spectrum of one’s unique and special abilities.

Through daily practice in many arenas or modules, one can experience greater freedom and fullness of life.

The basis of ILP is simple; if you treat the body, mind and spirit (as levels) and self, culture and nature (as quarters), and then create combinations, you will get 9 possible spaces for growth and awakening. ILP is the first approach to combining them all for a more effective personal transformation. That is why in his other works Wilber writes about transformational practices (a different name for ILP). If we take 3 levels (body, mind and spirit) in four quarters, we receive 12 spaces. ILP has created practical exercises for growth in all 12 dimensions, which is a unique and unprecedented approach to growth, development and awakening. Anyone can create their own ILP that is effective. ILP is expressed in 4 basic (core) modules: Body, Mind, Spirit and Shadow. AQAL – all quarters (me, we, it) and all levels (body, mind, spirit). This means experiencing and cultivating the body, mind and spirit in the self, culture and nature. In other words, what is realized in the self is embodied in nature and expressed in culture (ibid., p.217).

As Wilber writes, developmental models generally agree with the fact that people go through a series of stages or developmental waves from birth: “Lower, earlier stages are preliminary, partial and fragmented views of the world, whereas higher stages are integrated, understanding and holistic. For this reason, early stages are often referred to as the first row, and higher stages are referred to as the second row” (Wilber, Patten, Leonard, Morelli, 2008, p. XV). As he writes: “At integral stages of development, the inner world begins to have meaning, it unites and appears as a “uni-verse”, a single, united and integrated world, which unites not only different philosophies and ideas about the world, but also different practices of growth and development” (ibid., p. XV). The aim of integral life practice is to embrace all planes on which the opportunities for growth and development manifest themselves.

As he then writes: “Integral Life Practice is an integrated practice that will help you grow and develop to your full potential – your inner Freedom and the greatest fullness all splendour (in relationships, work, spirituality, career, in the game, in life itself)” (ibid., p. XV). Integral Life Practice includes all dimensions of existence (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual in self, culture and nature). Practice is based on interdependence and synergy. As he then writes:

“[...] Cross training radically accelerates the development of all dimensions – body, mind, spirit and shadow – involving faster, more effective, more efficient practices” (ibid. p. XVI).

The considerations presented above concern the institution of integral life practice, in which an integral part is the Body module, which must be included in the project of integral development. However, as I will try to demonstrate the issue related to the body is a problem for many contemporary researchers, and according to Ken Wilber, a solution is possible with an integral development project.

According to Wilber, the main problem that can be solved through the integral approach (the approach of all levels, all quarters) is what Schopenhauer called the “world node”, namely the mind-body problem (Wilber 2002, p.213). As Wilber observes: “a significant part of the mind-body problem is the product of the flat earth” (ibid., p. 213).

I would like to quote a few excerpts from Ken Wilber’s work *Integral Psychology* to illustrate this view, which, in Wilber’s opinion, shows an expansion of the scientific approach and aims to exclude elements of the first quarter (intentional), to exclude subjective areas in the scientific discourse (analysis of the upper right-quarter – behavioural).

Wilber specifies his view in the following way: “Not the distinction between mind and body, which is at least as old as civilization and has never disturbed anyone before, but **the separation of mind and body, which is a particular change in modernist and postmodern consciousness, accompanying the contraction of the Cosmos into a flat earth**” (Wilber 2002, p. 213). He then adds: “On flat earth we encounter a persistent dilemma connected with the relationship between mind and body: for the mind (consciousness, feelings, thoughts) – in short, for the areas of the Left Hand – there is no place in the world described exclusively in the categories of the Right Hand (material body and brain) and the mind becomes “a spirit in the machine” (ibid., p. 213). I fully agree with Wilber – when he writes: “We are therefore confronted with two apparently obvious, but contradictory truths: the truth of direct experience, which tells me infallibly that consciousness exists, and the truth of science, which tells me infallibly that the world consists exclusively of systems of basic units (quarks, atoms, strings, etc.), which have no consciousness and no new system of these unintelligible units will result in a mind” (ibid., p. 213). According to Wilber, this problem (i.e. body and mind) finds many solutions, but two dominate: *dualism and physicalism*. The dualistic approach had the greatest influence at the beginning of the modernist era (from Descartes to Leibniz); the physical view prevailed later and had prevailed until today.

I will try to characterise, after Wilber, these dominant solutions and present an integral solution to the problem, as the most balanced and advanced on the threshold of the 21st century. Wilber characterizes the physical approach in the following way: “According to the physical (or materialistic) approach, there exists only a physical universe, best described by physics and other natural sciences, and nowhere in this physical universe do we find consciousness, mind, experience. These ‘inner sensations’ are only illusions (or at best by-products deprived of any authentic reality)” (ibid., p. 214). As Wilber further notes: “In my terminology, this argumentation sounds as follows: all objective systems are described in the ‘it’ language, while experience, consciousness and properties are described in the ‘I’ language, so if we believe that the world described by science is the ‘real world’ – and there are many good reasons to believe that science gives us the greatest hope for discovering the truth – then naturally we must believe that properties, experience and consciousness are not ‘real’, but are illusions or by-products or secondary features of the real world shown by science” (ibid., pp. 214-215).

Dualists, on the other hand, argue that there are two entities: consciousness and matter. As Wilber writes: “But [...] dualists face an eternal dilemma: how can two completely different things influence each other? Ghosts, as we all know, do not move walls, but penetrate through them, so how can a spiritual mind exert real influence on a material body? Simply proving that the mind cannot be reduced to matter deprives dualists of the opportunity to explain how the mind can affect matter. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to explain e.g. why I can move my hand” (ibid., p. 216). According to Wilber “part [...] of the difficulty is the fact that both standpoints have adopted the terms of ‘flat earth’ and try to juggle them in order to obtain a solution which, as practically everyone agrees, is not satisfactory. If, however, we use the ‘all levels, all quarters’ approach, we immediately notice that the ‘mind’ and ‘body’ have two very different meanings, which in turn shows that one problem actually includes four” (ibid., pp. 216-217). In general, Ken Wilber illustrates this problem as follows: “First, the ‘body’ can mean the *biological organism as a whole*, including the brain (new cortex, limbic system, brainstem, etc.) – in other words, the ‘body’ can mean the entire Upper Right Quarter, which I will call the ‘body’. I will call the organism the ‘Body’ [...] Thus the brain is in the Body, which is a widely accepted scientific view (and a strict description of the Upper Right Quarter) (ibid., p. 217). But, as he writes: “the ‘body’ can also mean and for the average person it usually means subjective feelings, emotions and sensations of the body” (ibid., p. 217). According to Wilber, this second understanding of the ‘body’ is located in the Upper Left Quarter. The result of the reductionism of the flat earth is the fact that : “When Cosmos is reduced to flat earth (naturalism,

physicalism, scientific materialism), the inner *phenomena* of the 'I are still felt and strongly perceived by intuition (the mind can control the body, we have a certain degree of free will, we are aware, there is a unity of experience), but these phenomena are confronted with the world considered to be completely real, in which there are only the 'it' phenomena described by science (ibid., p. 219). Ken Wilber presents another important distinction related to the problem of the differentiation of the body: "There is a difference between the mind (formop) and the body felt (vital and sensory-motor). This difference can be experienced inside, i.e. in the areas of the Left Hand. This is not dualism, but rather a case of "exceeding and including" and almost every rationally thinking adult feels this exceeding element, in the sense that the mind, when we feel good, can control the body and its desires. But when 'the body' is understood as the organism of the Right Hand, and 'the mind' means the brain of the Right Hand, *all internal* stages of qualitative development (from body to mind and soul to spirit) are omitted – all these qualitative distinctions are completely lost in a material monism that does not solve the problem, but erases it" (ibid., p. 220).

As Wilber noticed: "The Dualist [...] acknowledges the reality of both consciousness and matter, but generally has no hope of uniting them. The 'Mind', generally understood as that which is 'inner', and the 'Body', generally understood as that which is 'outer', seem to be separated by an inexhaustible abyss – the dualism of the subject and the object" (ibid., p.220).

In order to solve the problem, it is necessary to consider it from an integral perspective.

According to Wilber, the solution is brought about by the recognition of transnational stages of development. As he adds: "this can only be solved at post-rational stages of development – stages generally treated with suspicion, ignored or actively denied by the majority of rationalist researchers" (ibid., p. 221). However, from an integral perspective, according to Wilber: "The subject and the object are *both* separate entities *and* aspects of the same thing: true unity in diversity. But this unity in diversity cannot be expressed in rational terms in a way that makes sense for a person who has not experienced transgressional experience. Therefore, those who wish to obtain 'proof' of this unsuccessful solution can only find it in the further development of their own consciousness. Although this solution ("you must further develop your consciousness if you want to know its full dimension") is not satisfactory to a rationalist (whether it is a dualist or a physicist), nevertheless, according to a genuinely integral paradigm it is the only acceptable one" (ibid., p. 221). According to Wilber, the "the world node is resolved" "by revealing the post-rational, non-dual stages of consciousness development" (ibid., p. 222).

The essence of the integral approach to the problem of the mind-body is contained in two phases. According to Wilber: “The first is to move from reductionist descriptions to all quarters. The recognition of four quarters (or simply the Great Three) allows the inclusion of phenomenological relations *in the first person* (‘I’), the intersubjective contexts *of the second person* (‘we’) and the physical systems *of the third person* (‘it’) – we will call it “1-2-3 studies on consciousness” (ibid., p. 223). In Wilber’s opinion, the second phase consists in “moving from an ‘all-quarters’ approach to an ‘all levels, all quarters’ approach” (ibid., p. 223). As Wilber concludes: “[...] The huge amount of data – pre-modernist, modernist and postmodernist – clearly indicates an integral approach, covering all quarters and all levels. All these data indicate that we are now close, if not to forming a complete and integral image of consciousness, then to realizing that nothing else will satisfy us anymore” (ibid., p. 228).

In my reflections on Ken Wilber’s integral view, I sought to present the real dangers of a reduction approach and, at the same time, to approximate the approach based on the AQAL model, in order to indicate a solution to the “node problem” of modern Western philosophy.

Conclusion

In my opinion, it is no longer enough to criticise consumer culture or the absurdities of expert culture – and this is an appeal to educators – but it is a duty to present a “positive approach”, as the blade of criticism often wreaks havoc and doubts, depriving one of hope that the undertaken effort has any sense. Guidelines contained in guidebooks on body awareness development, as well as the philosophy of the makeover movement (body modelling), based on the ideal of the body, “beautiful, slim and young”, treating the body as a text, which manifests itself in tattooing, make-up, ornaments, also ritual hiding of the body on the basis of gender, religion or illness, has its complement in the cultural utopia of agelessness, and thus in the pursuit of the ideal in rejection of illness, ugliness, old age or disability.

A social movement that promotes health and carnality can face *resistance* to surrendering to the orders of cultural authorities and can turn into social disobedience, which can lead to ruin, and the *carpe diem* philosophy can lead to stepping on the fragile ice of self-destruction. In my opinion, it is also worth to promote the phenomena that go beyond the negation of culture. Wilber has been successfully promoting an integral position in the West. Integral spirituality, which embraces the body, is a spirituality that affirms the body through practices invol-

ving the *fullness of man*, man moving integrally towards the fullness of humanity. Practices developed in the mainstream of consumer culture – also those recently emerging in the makeover movement, the philosophy of transhumanism, the philosophy of post humanism and the perspective of cloning seem very poor in comparison.

Ken Wilber, known all over the world mainly as the creator of an integral development model, offered us his vision of integral life practices (ILP), i.e. a model of conscious life, in which our daily activities are organized into work on *long-term development*. However, as we all know, and this is Wilber's warning: **the map should not be confused with the territory it describes**.

The same applies to the issue of development. Of course, there is a need for some practical guidance; however, the main issue is rather *the matter of our unique existence and our situation, as a lot depends on our understanding of the message or instruction*. They take on meaning only in the perspective of our specific existential and social anchorage. I do not want to say that reading Wilber's works is unnecessary. On the contrary, we can treat the issues he describes as a kind of a **guidebook through spiritual territory**, however, due to our unique life situation we should **stick to our unique context**. In principle, there is no alternative to conscious life. Even beautiful Disneyland turns out to be only a substitute of the attractions offered by a fully awakened life. We, Westerners, devote too much attention to exploring the outside world, neglecting the inside world. This is evidenced by a technologically exuberant civilization. Meanwhile, in the East, attention is directed to the inside. Only the "odyssey of the mind" will result in freedom. An awakened life is possible, as evidenced by the tradition of spiritual practices.

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