

## Embodied Spirituality: A Reading List

David Abram: *The Spell of the Sensuous* (Vintage, 1997)

Most of us are accustomed to consider the self, our innermost essence, as something incorporeal. Yet consider: Without this body, without this tongue or these ears, you could neither speak nor hear another's voice. Nor could you have anything to speak about, or even to reflect on, or to think, since without any contact, without encounter, without any glimmer of sensory experience, there could be nothing to question or to know. The living body is thus the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself – the very possibility of reflection and thought. (p.45)

Ruth Burrows: *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer* (Sheed & Ward, 1976 esp. pp.10, 22-23)

We are much more conscious than our predecessors that we *are* body, not an 'I' possessing a soul and a body. I am soul, I am body; and not more soul than body. What is more, I can have absolutely no knowledge save what comes to me through the body. (p.10)

Peter A Campbell & Edwin M McMahon: *Bio-Spirituality* (Loyola, 1997)

The key goal in spirituality and human evolution is to develop a consciousness potential within the *entire* human organism. Cut off from the knowing that is proper to our bodies, we lose that integral awareness through which we can resonate as living cells within a Larger Cosmic Organism. (p.1)

Antony Gormley: <http://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article3112-an-interview-with-antony-gormley.html>

... those years of intense meditation remain the foundation of my work. It was the opening of the door to a new kind of knowledge, knowledge that was about first-hand experience. Using the conditions of existence as a kind of test site for asking questions about what it means to be alive, what it means to be conscious. And using the body both as an instrument but also as a kind of arena, or landscape, for a kind of investigation or journey. I think I am still there; that is still at the heart of my work: looking at the body not as an image, not as an icon to be used for its symbolic or narrative purposes, but the body as an open place of inquiry and exploration that is constantly changing, that has no defined characteristics and we just have to watch, to attend to.

Thich Nhat Hanh: *Miracle of Mindfulness* (Rider, 1991)

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on the earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child – our own two eyes. All is miracle. (p.12)

Eugene T Gendlin: *Focusing* (Rider, 2003)

Today people live at various distances from this bodily source [of information and innovation]. I tell therapists: When your clients say something important, put your hand between your own stomach and chest, and ask them: "If you attend here, what comes in your body about this?" Therapy will immediately deepen for those clients who are already close to this source. The others will ask: "What do you mean?" (p.vii)

See also: [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org), [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focusing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focusing), [www.focusing.org.uk](http://www.focusing.org.uk), [www.biospiritual.org](http://www.biospiritual.org)

Mary Oliver: *New and Selected Poems* (Beacon, 1992)

You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves. (p.110)

Rowan Williams: *Lear & Eurydice* (The Way Supplement, 1998/92 pp.75-84)

... when we take up occupation of the site of our bodies in stillness before God. We are granted a place to be, simply in virtue of being there as material beings made by God: the physical act of drawing breath becomes an affirmation of my receiving of the gift of my place, an acknowledgement that I am 'wanted' by God in my fragility, my time-bound being which depends for its continuance on the physical environment. (p.83)

Rowan Williams: *Silence & Honey Cakes* (Lion, 2003 esp. Ch.4)

... the body itself can be a hermitage when I have embraced it as quite simply the place where I know I shall meet God [...] there is no individual soul in the abstract, only the human material of my body, my words, my memories; my gifts, my weaknesses. [...] Only the body saves the soul. (p.94)