

## **CHAPTER – 1**

### **Introduction**

### 1.1.The Idea of the Human Body

The study of the body finds its new, creative, and relentless journey since the 1980s and then it spreads out in various fields. Human beings, are known as the best creation of God and meanwhile so much creative in themselves. Humans spread the lights of their creative inventions from the time of their existence. Human beings are even well known as “Rational animals” and very much concerned about their selves, their lives, their originations, and so on. Generally, when we said, “Human beings”, in that very first moment it presents a structure in our consciousness and this structure is nothing but the “body” of human beings. But, what kind of body is talking about here? Naturally, two aspects of body understanding are there; the body as a corpse and the body as a living body. The body here discussed is the lived-body or condemned body or the body which represents us.

In relation to the body some important issues are there, these are- ‘what is the human body?’, ‘how is it made up?’, ‘how it performs?’, ‘what it is made up of?’ and so on. Normally, the human body is assembled of different parts, such as the head, neck, arms, legs, torso etcetera. Besides all these physical parts the human body consists of a number of biological systems, such as the circulatory system, digestive system, endocrine system, immune system, lymphatic system, nervous system, respiratory system, urinary system, and so on, and some vital organs, like, the brain, heart, kidneys, liver, and lungs, which work together to keep our bodies fit to survive in this world. Without the proper functions of all of these, we can never live even for a minute.

The body is a physical thing. Every particular body has a specific shape, size, gesture, and so on. The bodies of human beings are necessarily distinguishable and more complex from the bodies of other creatures. A pure human body is made up of a particular material, which is purely biological. Biological elements are combined with each other and successively build up a human body with a particular shape, size, and structure in the womb of his mother. Depending on this biological degree human body can be differentiated from other material bodies, like, statues made of wax, cement, rock etcetera, bodies of robots, and even from other animals, like- monkeys, cats, dogs, and even trees as well.

The concept of the body is very vital in our daily dealings. This concept is pivotal, not only in philosophy or any other discipline but from a layman's standpoint also. From time immemorial, this concept of body is an essential one. From the beginning of human civilization to till now, from the forest culture to the urban culture of recent times, from caves to the skyscrapers, this concept has taken a basic form. Human beings are embodied intentional agents-expressive, meaning-construing, and meaning intending beings embedded in a world that is loaded with significance, overlain with fantasy, imagination, memory, and all kind of projection. The overall term 'embodiment', then, is meant to capture this idea that human conscious subjects are intrinsically connected to the world in complex and irreducible ways.

## **1.2.Darwinian Concept of Evolution**

When we discuss human beings, their body, nature, and social-cultural growth, the name of natural scientist and philosopher Charles Darwin, is instantly springing up in our minds. Our mind is intertwined with such kind of thought because of his famous claim of 'Natural Selection' in the domain of mankind, which shapes every area of human life, such as physical, psychological, social-cultural, and so forth, through his evolutionary reformation in the history of biology.

The human being is a combination of both body and mind. To know a human being, we should know the nature of human beings first. There have so many myths regarding human nature. Though some thinkers think, yet following Darwin it can be mentioned that human nature is not a static stage. It is not something that runs through natural selection many years ago. Again, some claim that being innate in character, human nature is shared universally by all humans. The selection for evolution occurred when three conditions are taken place together. Firstly, when organism varies from each other. Secondly, when there must reside a difference between their fitness, and finally when there must have a tendency among offspring to resemble their parents or ancestors.

Every creature has struggled for the existence of their life since their birth, so that human too. Supporters of Darwin argue that Darwin mentions species as a branch of a 'tree of life'.<sup>1</sup> In a real tree, various branches are there; among them, certain similarities and dissimilarities can be found easily. Likewise, in every individual human being,

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<sup>1</sup>Lewens, T. (2007). *Darwin*, New York: Routledge.

there are some common and uncommon traits that are being found, which an individual share with all human beings. In human nature, there are some structural, physical, and psychological sets of characteristics, through which a specific individual is regarded as a member of human territory. Darwin mentions in his book *Origin* that, in a relation, beings are often signified by a great tree. In this symbolized tree, new green developing twigs are represented as existing species, whereas the aged branches that are reproduced by their ancestors for a long successive time, and now no longer struggle for their living as well as reproduction, are the extinct species. If we follow a tree, we can see that during the period of growth every new twig tried to develop itself as more strong than other twigs and branches. So, in this competitive progression strongest twigs succeed in the battle of life. Similarly, all species, including human beings tries to overlap one another and sometimes kill other species in the battle for life and living. But though different twigs fight with one another, among them some special twigs transform themselves into strong branches and help other tiny twigs to be born and develop, although they are surviving for their lives even now. In the same manner, in the way of survival competition, some species live in a long course of life with their genealogical order. At the time of creation, a large number of species were there but in the evolutionary time course, many of them turned out to be extinct species and can be found in a form of fossils, just as dead branches of a tree fell off from the tree. But very few of them were able to grasp the evolutionary battle and still survive in the world. With those surviving species, some new kinds of species were born in the evolutionary process and lived side by side with their ancestors. So, for Darwin, generation means a great tree of life, where dead branches or dead species, being non-existent, open up a new path for their descendent and cover the earth with beautiful and ever-growing new species.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.3.The Transition of Human Body**

Our body, which may be called ‘I’, is constantly changing, because the human undergoes temporal lives, which starts developing the bodily form from infancy to maturity and finally to death. Finitude, facticity, and historicity belong to the very essence of human embodiment. As Edmund Husserl defines the body, the ‘living center of my experience’, human beings are actually very much concerned and anxious about

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<sup>2</sup>Darwin, C. (1883). *On The Origin of Species: by Means of Natural Selection*, New York: D. Appleton and Company.

their body image. We really make our bodies the core of our livelihood. This concern regarding our apparent looks is usually normal and understandable because it can be shown that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century's Global Village, attractive people have quite distinct advantages in our society. We become able to personalize ourselves with extremely rigid and uniform standards of beauty. This anxiety about body image has been popularized by advanced technology and particularly by the rise of mass media, TV, magazines, social media, and so forth. Unfortunately, we sometimes adopt all of those ideas which are being displayed in our technological media without any questioning. The reaction concerning body image varies according to the species, sex, age, mood, ethnic group, and so on. Along with designing a tattoo, bodybuilding, different fashionable items, and dresses that are produced and marketed by various companies, our body as the abode of expressive style finally finds its place in the global world.

The discussion about the concept of the body gained its intense peak of success in the recent technological age. Nowadays, it not only remains a biological one but it gets molded into various forms and figures. The body is not just a category of the essence, however, it becomes a base, a 'text' in the Derridian sense, where everything can be written on or highlighted. The fact is the body not just writes but can be written on. It draws popular attention in humanities and social sciences, because of its tangible, particular, experienceable, and locational form. Another important thing that molded the body and bring new popularity is, the redundant use and effects of cyberspace in our daily dealings and there is no place for rejection of this very truth. In the modern age, different technological innovations change human lives by replacing machines in place of human labor. This replacement finds its most intense in this postmodern era, where machines not only switch the works of human beings, such as most of us now write through a machine, like- computer, instead of using our hands, we prefer an email in the place of a letter; nowadays human beings are often substituted by machines, like- robots, and cyborgs. Here an artificial body supersedes a natural one. Thus, it is clear that technology plays an important role in the transformation of mankind. The highest modulation of the body is taking a form of a cyborg. In the words of Donna Haraway, "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction".<sup>3</sup> So, the cyborg is a combination of humans and machines. Biology and technology blended up here in order to form a novel

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<sup>3</sup>Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 149.

meta-human or mechanical-human or Posthuman. Cyborgs are imagined but real, and a condensed image of both imagination and material reality.<sup>4</sup> Just as the body is the mediator between the world and the conscious spirit in the Nietzschean sense, in the same manner, the cyborg is the medium between the organism and technology, the real-world and virtual world, social relations, and cyber relations.

#### **1.4.The Body Consciousness**

Human beings of the present century widely believe in a dispersal living and in contrast, they are suffering the problems of attention, overstimulation, stress, depression, anxiety, and so on. Their dispersal living is mainly centered around the body. The peoples of this recent era are so much plagued by the various kinds of ever-growing socio-cultural and personal dissatisfactions, which were mainly generated by tricky body images. The living body is the primary component of all of our perceptions and actions. But instead of these two, feelings, consciousness, movements of the body, all are being long criticized and ignored for giving place to the self. The body has its own place in philosophy, however mostly through a negative image, as a prison for the self, as a source of error, ignorance, distraction, corruption, and all of the biasness that are being reinforced and reflected mostly by the idealistic philosophers, the body has lost all its importance. If we follow then we can see that, from the ancient time, the concept of the body or the embodied way of life has an important and distinct part. However, the disciplines of the ancient past were found with the idea of ‘body punishing’ by rejecting all bodily activities, in order to show that, the mind and the soul can achieve more power and freedom through tough bodily asceticism, for example Plotinus, the Hellenistic philosopher, was felt so ashamed for ‘being caged in the body’, and from a keen to transcend the body, he drastically limits his everyday diet as well as abstains himself from bathing. From the words of Saint Paul, “Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh”,<sup>5</sup> the embodiment seems a kind of discomfoting vulnerability. Even, the cultivation of body consciousness is criticized as a threat and danger to psychology, cognition, and morality, whereas, in philosophy, in order to enhance self-knowledge, it would seem to necessarily entail the exercise of heightening the somatic or bodily awareness. However, although Kant affirms self-examination and self-knowledge as a crucial duty, at the same time, He also denounces bodily introspections as a generating

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.150.

<sup>5</sup> Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Cambridge University Press.

cause of melancholia and other evil deeds. Philosophy, for its long prejudices, was shrunk and replaced from its true place of 'art of living' and turns mere as a narrow-field academic discourse. At that time of crisis, the body holds back a strong presence in the field of philosophy. Some philosophers widely accept the value of the body in the field of philosophy and cultivate the idea of heightening consciousness and philosophical insight into the body. Similarly, some artists have devoted themselves towards the body with adoring and intense love. They have realized that our mental life is precisely and powerfully displayed through bodily expressions. Even the most subtle differences in belief, meaning, opinion, desire, feeling, and so on, have been reflected through all of our postural and gestural attitudes of figures and faces. But the problem is, instead of representing the body as an embodied consciousness, artists tend to portray the human body as an attractive object in the consciousness of another person. By doing such objectification of the body, artists sometimes glorify the body's image and beauty to make the body a more desired object, and as a result, the stylistic exaggeration of the body turns into a deceptive image of bodily ease and grace.

However, it can be stated from the above that, the artists are longing with a wish of beautifying and glorifying the external parts of the body, whereas, philosophers are more concerned about the mind by founding the body consciousness as a disconcerting matter. Philosophers, in the past, have focused on the mind because the body is portrayed as the clearest expression of human imperfections, weakness, bondage, limitation, and hence, mortality. To them, the body consciousness shows a feeling of inadequacy. But in the experience of our day-to-day life, we can see that the body reigns the idea of beauty, health, performance, and action, which basically indicates the body consciousness is not the consciousness of one's own, rather it is the consciousness of more than one's own body alone. Although the body is a means through which intense pleasures are being felt, despite this, the body's consciousness more firmly and acutely focuses on the pain. The body is not only a site in which the ethos and values of a person can be physically displayed and developed, but actually, through the body, one can make perfect his/her skills of perception and performance in order to improve the cognition and the capacities for the sake of virtue and happiness. Here, 'the body', basically means a living, sentient, feeling, and purposive body, not merely a physical corpus of flesh and bones.

Many objections and negative conclusions are coming in the way of endorsing the concept of body consciousness. No doubt, the body has got its place always as negative, ignored, and inferior to the mind or soul. But here some quarries necessarily come in front of us regarding the body. Does the bodywork or perform best when we ignore it? If it is true that, the body is the reason for all our faults, bondage, ignorance, negative and false decisions, then how can we make right all our faults, ignorance, bad and negative habits and at the same time, improve our bodily decisions and uses, the somatic self-use, without critical bodily or somatic consciousness? Philosophy should promote the self-knowledge of body consciousness along with the maxim “know thyself”, otherwise, we can never know our somatic selves, nature, feelings, conduct in a better way. Though the mind-body problems tend us to think about the problems and risks regarding the body and bodily activities, despite this, it can be stated that, if the body consciousness is being cultivated in a disciplined manner, then it can also be proved as an invaluable tool for pursuing self-improved and self-discovered philosophical life, which can equally help one to take himself/herself beyond the self. However, through disciplined practical training in somaesthetic awareness, the enhancement of body consciousness could be possible. Because, our bodily consciousness is typically thought of in a way that, it seems like our bodily activities are hampering the performance of our habitual actions, which could be easy to perform but yet was demonstrated as difficult, awkward, painful, and so on. So, the creative strategies, provided by somaesthetic awareness, can help us to overcome every faulty habit and other disorders relating to psychological, somatic or bodily, and behavioral problems. Therefore, body consciousness is not a concept, the cultivation of which only speaks about the young, strong, and beautiful bodies. Rather, as soon the older and weaker we get, the aging and infirmity bring a displeasing somatic consciousness among us, and due to these conditions, we are tended to think more about the improvement of self-use and performance of the body.

### **1.5. The Body as Somaesthetics**

The philosophers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century try to explore the role of the body in our experience. Somaesthetics is a critical study and meliorative cultivation, where human beings experience and use the living body (soma) as a ground of sensory perceptiveness

(aesthetics) and artistic self-fashioning. Somaesthetics is a discipline that represents both the theoretical and practical cultivation of the living body. Here in somaesthetics, the term 'soma' designates a feeling, sentient and living body, not merely a physical body, which could be devoid of sensation, feeling, and life. Whereas, the term 'aesthetic' plays a dual role, firstly, by emphasizing the perceptual role of the living body and secondly, by upgrading the aesthetic practices of stylizing one's own self as well as by appreciating the aesthetic abilities of other selves and things. However, some might ask, why does the body consciousness furnish as a systematic study? Since the past, our culture already had fixed some ideas regarding our body, that, 'how should our body look like?', 'How much our body can weigh or be measured?', 'How pleasantly the body smells?', 'How gorgeously and fashionably the body can be presented?', 'How powerfully the body can perform any action?' and so on. And according to the critics, If the body is associated with such established ideas, then what is the need of engaging body consciousness in the fields like philosophy, where traditionally the mind is labeled as superior and prior to the body. Another objection could be like, that human beings have already fully occupied the conceptual powers with overcrowding matters like weight, beauty, smells, and fashion of the body. Humans have transformed a lot by the information revolution and through increasing concepts of images, signs, and factoids, we are already submerged fully in the surrounding environments of our natural, socio-political, and most importantly virtual worlds of experience. Then, why do we devote our limited body and body consciousness again? Our body is experiencing and working perfectly well with its automatic mechanisms, then why should the further development of the body need? The body, as a means, is well enough with its attention to matters, then why should treat the body as an end and focus on bodily consciousness? As an answer, it could be stated that the body composes essential and fundamental dimensions of our identity. The body, by structuring our habits, needs, pleasures, capacities, and interests, determines the ends and means of our lives and by defining the relying characters which can signify our ends and means, composes the fundamental perspective or mode of engagement. But, all of our habits, activities, interests, and pleasures, are being designated as structured by our minds. However, it is well accepted by all that, the body, along with its senses, is the key medium of all worldly perceptions and though embodied perceptions and experiences are so informative for the connection to the world, the cultivation of the body consciousness is so important for both, the improvement of the perceptual acuity and the satisfaction with the experiences which

the body offers. Actually, sometimes the body seems ambiguous to human beings. The same body, as subjective sensibility, experiences the world, and at the same time, as an object, is being perceived in the world. We know the body is the center of all our worldly experiences and for this subjective approach, the body is not being understood as an object. On the other hand, in our own experiences, the body inevitably performs like an object of consciousness, even if it functions as an object of one's own embodied consciousness. If we touch a bump of any of our body parts with a finger, such as a knee, another body part seems to be an object to us and our bodily subjectivity would feel the other body part as an object of exploration. Human beings are thus both, 'is a body' and at the same time, 'have a body'. Our body is experienced as a transparent source of our perception to us, not as an object of awareness. The body is focused on such objects, that depend on 'from which' and 'through which' we find the objects of the world for manipulation. But the body is never been grasped as an explicit object of consciousness, even though instead of being central, the body is felt as a background condition of perception. Yet at the time of doubt or difficulty, the body is perceived as something that the human 'has' and 'uses' rather than "is". The body is something, according to their will humans can command to perform, but sometimes it fails to perform an action according to our will and due to this ill performance, we feel distraction, disturbance, or sometimes, it makes us suffer. Thinking of the body as a commanding object and ill performer encourages somatic alienation and defames the body as an instrument. Even though the instrumentalization or objectification of the body ever occurs, the body is deserving and comprehending to come within the scope of our attentive consciousness. Because, by the way of leveling the body as an object or instrument to the self, it can be observed that, the body has proved itself as the most primordial tool of tools. Every time it works as the most basic medium while interacting with our several environments. The body works as a necessary condition in all of our perceptions, actions, and thoughts. Just as an experienced person needs the help of an expert for his/her further growth of knowledge, likewise, we also require better somatic or bodily knowledge in order to improve our performance, understanding, and practices, which would help us to live better lives. The awareness of body consciousness would be improved more by deploying the usage of all of our tools and media, because all tools and media require an approximate form of bodily performance as might be like, pushing a door or blinking an eye, or any movement of the body.

The body as a primordial instrument was recognized long before. But yet, the aristocratic tendency of Greek Philosophers has made a distinction between mind and body, as by signifying the material or physical or bodily means a menial necessity, whereas, establishing mental or ideal end as an absolute necessity. Like, Plato and the subsequent idealist philosophers, never recognize the body as a medium, rather by using the body's very instrumentality, they actually tried to exclude it from every essential and valuable part of a human being. But along with, being the primordial instrument, the body acts as a medium as well and connects between two mediated terms, and hence, at the same time separates them from each other by standing in between them. Being both an instrument and a medium, the body helps human beings in achieving their purpose and the fulfilment of that purpose. Plato in *Phaedo* makes a condemnation against the body's role of being a medium as an aspect of negative interference. He argues, that the body, being a negative object, distracts humans from searching for true knowledge by interrupting their attention with its unnecessary sensational disruptions and hence, detached from reality. The body also diverts humans' minds through all sorts of desire, fantasy, and nonsense. Even, though the bodily sensations are imperfect and through such kind of flawed perception, the body actually perverted human beings from reality. Moreover, the feelings of the body are represented as unnecessary and counterproductive in the way of effective thought and action. So, the consciousness of body-feelings has been rejected for being corrupt and distractive obstacles in the way of our cognitive, ethical, and practical ideals. Another point for which Plato disgraces the body is that the body is the combination of different sensory organs and technologies, such as eyes, ears, mouth, limbs, nose, and so on. According to him, such plural and separable elements of the body only provide plurality and separability to humans. And hence, Plato was pleased by the soul, because being indivisible in nature, the soul always seeks true knowledge, unity, and reality despite the distortive prison of the body.

However, another argument of Plato, Neoplatonists and even modern philosophical idealism to derogate the body as only an instrument is, that there has a clear distinction between an instrument and an agent or a tool and a person who uses the tool. If the body is an instrument or a tool, then the tool must be different from the agent or the soul. Therefore, the body must be different from the soul, no matter how much it is essential or intimate to the soul, and altogether it would always serve as mere external means. So, for Plato and other idealists, the mind or soul must be the true self alone and cultivation

of body consciousness and bodily knowledge is neither essential nor required like self-cultivation and self-knowledge because the body is just a servant of the soul. As an answer to these objections regarding the body, it could be said that it is definitely true that we use ourselves more than our bodies. A human being is a combination of both mind or soul and body. So, even when we are abstaining from using our bodies, we still use our minds or souls in order to think, will, pray, hope, wish, dream, decide any situation, or exercise virtue, morality, socio-economic conditions, politics, and so forth. But does such kind of using of one's own mind or soul entails its 'being' merely as an instrument, as the body is used to think for the mind or soul? The answer is no. The 'being' of the mind or soul is designated as an essential part of the mind or soul. Again, it can be stated that our mind or soul is the very part of the 'real self' or the 'Ultimate Soul'. Our soul uses the part intellectual, part knowledge of the ultimate soul. Now, if the belongings that our self uses from the real self, have been taken away or removed then what else would be left there? Actually, there would remain nothing at all, because we certainly use ourselves (both the mind and body), even when we practice other things or do not practice. So, using one's own self is not a contradiction, but rather, a necessary condition for living, and by heightening somatic or bodily consciousness, the use of the self would definitely be improved. Body consciousness does not signify mere instrumentalism, rather an enhanced self-use through bodily consciousness surely gives an opportunity and ability to enjoy oneself in a more intensified manner. Body consciousness is not a disruption, rather it significantly improves our perception and the engagement of the soul with the outside world, and as a result, through the improved soul, which is the primary and essential instrument for all our worldly perception, reflection, and action, our knowledge about the world become clear and distinct. Then, through such clear and distinct knowledge, humans can successively achieve the knowledge of Reality. It can be said profoundly that, bodily self-consciousness is conscious more about the body itself.

### **1.6.The Body as 'Written Subject' in the contemporary Culture**

The living body should be used as a site of sensory appreciation, where humans apply their creative approaches to self-fashioning. The body is not just a physical body, it is more than that, for a mere physical body could be a body devoid of all feelings and

sensations and hence devoid of life too. But, the body, which is supposed to take an important role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's socio-political and cultural activity, should be full of feelings, sensations as well as aesthetic qualities of stylizing one's self, and at the same time, this body would appreciate such qualities in other selves too. It is no doubt true that the contemporary culture has lavish immensely and lots of attending looks are given to the body. However, the contemporary culture intensifies the body awareness only to make the corporate domain dominant. The 'body-look'<sup>6</sup> industries, like- fashion, cosmetics, tattoos, cosmetic surgeries (for producing a better look), dietary and health supplements (which claim to provide a healthy and most importantly slim figured body), soft drinks, and fresh fruit juice (though with lots of preservatives and artificial color and flavoring, claims to give a healthy and happy intestine), essentially serves a huge in maximizing corporate profit. Expect to realize true body awareness, these industries with the help of reinforcing social domination actually impose a self-aversion among human beings. The corporates through their promotions, and advertisements, creatively make believe that people can never realize, hence achieve, the ideals of body consciousness and by doing so, they create a sense of oppressive inadequacy among human bodies, which actually stimulates the buying of their marketed products and remedies. They actually make us blind by their attractive advertisements and give fake promises of improving our embodied experience. Therefore, their real motive is to distract humans from their actual feelings, pleasures, and capacities of the body. According to our culture, body-consciousness is a kind of consciousness, which appears to others in accordance with some presumed societal norms of attractive appearance and at the same time, someone's appearance is judged depending on the conventional or orthodox models of those presumed appearances. In the time of excessively corporate leading society, the norms or standards of body appearance have been set by the respective corporate culture in new speculation and are judged according to that. It is somehow true that there has some aesthetic differentiation among all bodies, but our society is entrenched to think that, one's own body is aesthetically impoverished than others' bodies. But truly, there is no need of setting some profound norms or standards for bodily appearance. The consciousness of our bodily feelings and actions actually does not require any attentive standard, examination, or sharpening. Yet, through the

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<sup>6</sup>Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Cambridge University Press, p.6.

continuous bodily perception and reflection we can identify ourselves better and at the same time, can achieve more profound and clear bodily-consciousness, which can lead us to use our own selves in a better way. When a person focuses on bodily feelings, he/she must have to emphasize body-feeling against the surrounding environment, which equally constitutes the surrounding environment as an experienced background. For example, when someone stands or sits in a place, he/she can equally feel the particular place or environment upon which he/she is standing or sitting. Likewise, when we breathe, at that time, we can feel the surrounding air we breathe in. Hence, from bodily self-consciousness, we can explore a new kind of soul, which is essentially relational, interdependent, and situated, which is far different from the soul, traditionally embedded as independent, monadic, static, and indestructible.