

Mindfulness of the body 2: The 'body-in-the-mind' experience

We may feel or think that our minds are in our bodies, but is this true or are perhaps our bodies in our minds? This may seem like a nonsensical question. Indeed it is impossible to just figure it out one way or the other; or to see the significance of this to our lives, unless we examine our perceptions and experiences with an open mind.

It might *feel* like the mind is in the body. Maybe it feels sometimes like it is in the brain or maybe in the whole nervous system. Maybe in the organs as well, or some of them at least, perhaps the heart or the guts. This may be where we feel certain things, but that doesn't mean that the mind is in the body, it means that our feelings are being *experienced* in the body. But our feelings are, of course, really in our minds. So, in this way, these feelings can make us experience the mind as in the body, or in fact they might even *actually* pull our minds into the body (as a kind of contraction of the mind). If this is then our only experience of feelings, then we will take our minds to be there in the body. What we experience of our bodies may, in fact, be just these feelings.

Yet if, through mindfulness (a relaxed, open mind), we cultivate an image or picture of the body in the mind, of some kind, and our body in that way finds its existence in the mind, rather than the mind being stuck in the body; then the body no longer appears as a physical thing in our experience but as a mental thing. This also changes our experience of feeling, at this point we experience feelings as well as clearly within the mind, rather than within the body. We therefore now have a clear experience of feelings, one that is in line with reality; we also have a clear image of our bodies, rather than our bodies merely being a mass of feeling for us¹.

We can also *think* that the mind is somewhere in the body. Objective science seems to tell us that the mind is somehow in the body or brain. In our more mindful subjective experience, however, as we have seen, the body is in the mind. So should we not then believe the objective fact rather than the subjective experience? Do these two in fact contradict each other? Well, if we see the (open) mind, as containing and consisting of information, rather than just seeing the form or energy of the mind that is dependant on the body, then we see the mind as having another kind of existence altogether. It is then this second order of existence that is represented by our purely subjective experience. This is the same mind existing in two different ways, physical and purely mental – this is duality without dualism.

I offer this for your reflection.

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¹ Even if these feelings may be dependent on the body, they are not the body – our bodies are not the feelings. The mind is in the body. The body is not in the mind..