



## The Question of Embodiment

*A companion piece to **The Unshakable Ground***

From the very beginning, human beings have asked the question: *Why am I here?*

It is a genuine and primordial inquiry—one that arises naturally in the heart. But in most of us, it is quickly hijacked by the ego. The ego turns it into a survival project: *What is my purpose? What legacy will I leave? How do I prove my existence matters? How do I reaffirm my existence in a threatening world?*

Once captured in this way, the question becomes a tool of self-preservation, feeding the endless drama of significance and insecurity that is the underlying substrate of experience for most of us. This subsuming of the real by the unreal was explored in the companion essay [\*The Unshakable Ground\*](#).



Yet the question itself is not the problem. It is real. And in fact, it grows only more compelling once we have seen through the ego's games. After awakening to the unshakable ground of being—knowing ourselves as the dimensionless and formless, the unborn and eternal, the threshold of unlimited possibility—the question doesn't dissolve. If anything, it sharpens. It forms a creative surface tension within the deep peace of surrender. It is the clarity and awakeness that accompanies the deep relaxation of pure being.

It shows itself most vividly in questions such as:

*If I am infinite, why am I also here as a finite body?*

*If I am not bound by time, why do I live in time, aging and dying?*

*If I am not attached to any fixed identity, why do I nevertheless inhabit this particular form?*

This is not an existential crisis anymore. It is an existential wonder—a question that won't let go, a catalyst for response arising in the moment, a place of perfect [\*poise\*](#).

### Traditions in Contrast

Across spiritual traditions, this question of embodiment inevitably arises—after “*Who am I?*” it is the next fundamental question of existence—and it has been answered in radically different ways.



Some teachings see the body as an obstacle, even an illusion. The body is temporary, fragile, and prone to endless craving. Identification with it is said to blind us from the truth of spirit. “*You cannot see God if you believe you are the body*”—this is the refrain of those who point only toward transcendence. The task here is to rise above form, to detach from flesh and dissolve into what is unconditioned.

Others regard embodiment as a rare and precious gift. In Buddhist thought, the chance to be born human is considered extraordinarily fortunate—a brief window where we have both the intelligence to hear the Dharma and the freedom to practice it. To be embodied, then, is not a prison to escape but a vehicle to cherish, a fleeting opportunity to awaken fully.

Still others go further and see the body not merely as a means but as a revelation in itself. In tantric traditions, in mystical Christianity, and in many indigenous cosmologies, the body is celebrated as sacred vessel, temple, or altar—the divine taking form and endlessly discovering itself in movement, sensation, desire, relationship, and engagement. Here embodiment is not the problem but the path.

Each of these perspectives holds a relative truth, a facet of the whole picture. Each also carries danger: the denial of form can turn into life-denying asceticism and a philosophy of escape; the cherishing of form can tip into clinging, fear of loss, and the attraction of being special; the celebration of form as divine can collapse into self-righteousness, indulgence, and ultimately confusion.

And yet, the question of embodiment persists, undiminished. Beyond doctrine and interpretation, it remains alive in the lived tension of being both infinite and finite, both unbound and bound. Perhaps holding the question, rather than demanding an answer, is the key to living in that liminality. We will explore this possibility further.

## The Ego’s Return in Disguise

Even when we hold the question with openness, we must maintain an ongoing quiet vigilance, for the ego has a way of slipping back in through subtler doors. For most of us, awakening doesn’t completely dissolve the ego—we just become more familiar with its wily ways, and if we drop our guard, it can slip itself in front of our view like a pair of tinted spectacles.

For it has its own agenda: it wants to turn embodiment into a project of meaning, a stage on which to display its significance.

The thought arises: *I am here to accomplish something extraordinary. I am here to prove my life has purpose. I am here to leave a mark on the world*—a Messiah complex that is the greatest temptation to even the most-saintly of realised beings.

On the surface, these can look noble, even spiritual—that is the hook. But underneath, it is still the same grasping mechanism: the need to secure identity, to guarantee worth. The genuine question *Why am I here?* is once again hijacked and narrowed into a story of personal importance.

The deeper invitation is not performance but participation. To be embodied is not to prove anything but to join the mystery, to allow life to reveal itself through this fragile, fleeting form.



## Living with the Question

This is why, for me, the question of embodiment is not a riddle to be solved but a practice to be lived. Every morning on the cushion, it greets me anew. It doesn't even arise as a specific question like "*How does the infinite live through this finite form?*" but more an openness framed as curiosity—not a need to know, but an offering of myself to this moment, an invitation to receive a gift of grace but not a demand for it.

There is no answer waiting in the wings, only the opportunity to be present. The task is not to define a purpose, but to stay available—open to be moved, spoken, acted through. In this way, embodiment is not something I control but something I consent to.

Many times, it is the simple gift of silence, clarity, and deep peace. But sometimes the thread of something will tease my attention and this availability takes shape as a poem. A line may arrive unbidden, and from it a whole piece unfolds. In *Exchange*, the body becomes the site of reciprocity—where the infinite gives itself into form, and form offers itself back to the infinite. In *Gentle Curiosity*, one realises that one's embodiment is the answer to the question—not as a problem to be solved but as a living exploration to inhabit.

At other times, the same question spills into ideas to be unpicked and unravelled in longer essays, or into the impulse to reach out to another person and engage in dialogue. However it appears, it is the same movement—the formless speaking itself into form through the ordinary channels of language, relationship, and time.

Here the phrase *Being Available* finds its deepest meaning. To be available is to allow the body to become a threshold between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between timeless awareness and the pulse of time.

## The Question as Practice

The question *Why am I here?* does not end at awakening. If anything, it becomes sharper, more luminous, more insistent. But its quality changes. It is no longer the ego's demand for affirmation or purpose; it is the soul's gesture of wonder, a bow before the mystery of being both infinite and finite. It dissolves the hard shell of insistence and wipes the screen of perception clean of cherished but false perspective.

For me, there is no final answer, nor an expectation of one. It is an act of surrender to the flow of being, a dive into the realm of possibility where creation bubbles out of emptiness into wholeness. So yes, perhaps the body itself is the answer—not as a fixed conclusion, but as the place where the question continues to unfold as a living answer.

To live the question is to remain available, poised at the threshold, letting the infinite move through the finite, moment by moment. In this way, embodiment is not a problem to be escaped nor a stage on which to prove significance, but the very altar where the formless and the formed meet in quiet intimacy.