

Running Head: THE PRESENCE OF SHADOW

Exploring the Practical Presence  
of Shadow in the Sensory,  
Phenomenological, and Developmental Bodies

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### Abstract

This paper will consider the experience of practical embodiment with an eye towards the placement of psychological and somatic shadow. I endeavor to explore the Upper Quadrants as bracketed aspects of the tetra arising of self and experience through the lens of the sensory body, regarding the placement of shadow in the sensory body's function. Reverse engineering my own phenomenological experience, I suggest the placement of shadow in Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's sensory model allows for the limiting of phenomenological experience and consequently, a limiting of the trajectory of the developmental body.

## Introduction

The practical experience of being human is embodied awareness. This paper will explore this embodied state of being through the phenomenological shadow work of the author, the body oriented work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (2008), and the mind oriented work of Mark Johnson (2008). A practical conception of shadow will be explored historically relying largely on the broader conceptions of Ken Wilber (2006, 2000) to suggest a functional conception of shadow based on the phenomenological experience of the author with self and clients. Using the Upper Quadrants of integral theory, the concept of developmental lines and Robert Kegan's subject/object theory, along with an eye towards the larger trajectory of Wilber's altitudes in the overall developmental orchestration, it is possible to excavate the powerful influence of shadow in the sensory to perception equation and that formula's connection to the experiential and developmental capacity of the individual. Such an undertaking requires an understanding of the fine interweaving of several elements. Towards this end, Integral Theory's AQAL tags will be occasionally used to clarify aspects that may become tangled in the exploration.

### A Personal Journey

I was born sensitive in a family decidedly more resilient. The world from my body's view was coarse and indifferent, often harsh and cruel. My difficulty in acclimating to this disparity of character between myself, my family, and world took its toll in a contracting tendency that spanned my psychological, mental, emotional, and physical self. In short, it created a crucible of experience that allowed me to collect a variety of shadow. To my benefit, however, my deep, barely conscious grasp of the numinous exerted itself as optimism and an indefatigable perseverance towards wholeness. And while it took years to unearth from the detritus of my being, it eventually became possible to articulate it as such. At the crux point of my life, I discovered the power of tangible Spirit in the form subtle energy manipulation. For the last 10 years, beginning with proficient assistance and then later on my own, I have been immersed in the process of energetically releasing the subtle patterns (UR) behind inhibitions in the sensory body and connecting them to the phenomenological (UL) thought, feelings, and beliefs to which they were correlated. My world has expanded while my perspective has shifted again and again. Subject has become object, over and over, and over. Today, having dug out 30 years of the refuse from the contracted, self annihilating, consumptive, and denied self, I have

arrived at a position that allows me the vantage point of empathic resonance and psychic state clarity to a wide range of shadow in its empirically described subtle energy (UR) format, as it arises phenomenologically (UL), as thoughts, feelings, emotions, beliefs. In other words, I read subtle energy frequencies (UR) through the sense organ of my body/mind and translate/interpret them as thought, feelings, and belief (UL) metaphors that have conscious meaning for myself and clients. Allowing for the confusion that working with subtle energy entails, and considering my belief that these subtle energy patterns (UR) are the communication of the sensory body, inclusive of shadow, through the phenomenological body (UL), a brief exploration of the edges of subtle energy will provide a necessary clarity toward the end goal of this paper's purpose.

### *Subtle Energy*

When referring to subtle energy or subtle energy systems, I am referring to the properties that precede matter and form. But subtle energy is a highly subjective field of discourse. This creates a tremendous amount of difficulty in deciding exactly what the subject *is* we are discussing, and then even more troubling is how that *what* behaves. Subtle energy communicates as first person phenomenological experience, hence its resilient subjective, culturally influenced quality. To counter this subjective and cultural fog, I tend to use William A. Tiller, PhD., and Ken Wilber to articulate subtle energy, staying empirical and rational while reverse engineering my own phenomenological experience to shape and place the empirical and rational data and information.

William A. Tiller, Ph.D. is professor emeritus of Materials Science and Engineering at Stanford University and has articulated empirically the relationship between the physicality of matter, its subtle energy aspects, and consciousness. Wilber has created consistent philosophical, rational, and phenomenological renderings providing an in depth unified theory of the interactions of matter, mind, soul, Spirit, and the consciousness that arises as awareness of these aspects of being. The work of both men offer systematically reasonable, empirically valid views of these difficult and culturally challenged areas, plainly and concisely. More importantly, the work of both men are consistent with my experience of the world, and the subtle energies of that world.

Tiller defines subtle energy rather simply as (2007, p. 229), "All those energies existing in the universe beyond the four known to and accepted by present-day science." This seems

straightforward enough until we place this definition in the context of its domain, such as "[The] Potential cognitive domains of universe beyond the domain of physical cognition by humans or present physical instruments. Some humans presently sense these domains, most do not. ....They are labeled etheric, astral, or *emotional, mind, spirit, divine.*" (Italics added for emphasis.) The emotional and mind domain of subtle energies are pertinent to the discussion of shadow here as is Wilber's concept of involution/evolution that can be depicted in the following sequence (Figure 1) distilled from his *Excerpt G: A Comprehensive Theory of Subtle Energies*, Part II, (2006g. p, 11):



Figure 1 Wilber's sequencing of the subtle energies as they descend into matter.

Wilber uses the metaphor of "hide-and-seek" to illustrate the movement of the Spirit matrix, or Ground of Being into matter:

In involution or creation, radically unqualifiable Spirit decides to play a game of hide-and-seek, and hence 'forgets' itself and throws itself outward to create a manifest world of manyness and otherness. ...the first things pure Spirit creates is Soul, which then throws itself outward to create mind, which throws itself outward to create life (or prana), which then throws itself outward to create insentient matter (quarks, atoms). At the end of that ontological sequence, matter blows into existence as a crystallization and condensation of prana. (p. 11)

As is articulated implicitly in Wilber's rendering, and for the purposes of this paper toward an understanding of the sensory body and phenomenological body interaction, we will consider this linear sequencing of Spirit to matter as a sort of filtering of consciousness or awareness that allows for the contracting subtle energies of soul and mind to, in this case, not only limit the full awareness of the self as Spirit, but also to limit the awareness capacity of consciousness as it traverses the developmental or evolutionary sequence. This developmental or evolutionary sequence is the returning of matter to Spirit depicted by the bottom set of arrows in Figure 1, and plots with a very broad brush, all of the individual developmental trajectories, specific to this paper being the self/cognition lines of development, such as Wilber's altitudes and fulcrums, S. Cook-Greuter's levels of increasing embrace, J. Loevinger's ego stages, to name a few. We will, not touch any deeper the details of these lines, but it is important to note the progress of evolution as the reversing of the primary involutory contraction that conceals Spirit, and soul,

and to which a journey of growth from infant to adult must be made for the processes and minutiae of mind to fully engage.

### Shadow

Shadow is a psychological structure that points to a variety of unconscious drivers buried from consciousness in an effort to avoid what the ego self perceives as dangerous to the self construct. 'Shadow' is a term identified by Freud and others, and coined by Jung (Sheehy, 2004, p.83) to articulate the repression or suppression of aspects of the self deemed unacceptable by the ego. These disowned aspects are often projected onto others in a third person capacity that can create emotional difficulty, conflict, and obscure responsibility and authenticity.

I suggest the phenomenological body can be used as a communicative source for the presence of shadow in many circumstances. Toward this objective I offer Wilber's use of the example of phenomenal states of anger and sadness to illustrate the connection between strong phenomenal states and the shadow to which they point. Mad becomes sad when anger is felt to be inappropriate. Depression moves in and sets up house and will not leave until the anger that remains obscured beneath its convincing coating of sadness is "owned." Wilber states (*Integral Spirituality*, 2006, p. 120), "Whenever I disown and project my own qualities, they appear 'out there,' where they frighten me, irritate me, depress me, obsess me." In other words, strong feelings, emotions, recurring thought and beliefs (i.e. I never do anything right.) in the phenomenological body indicate unrecognized shadow in "9 out of 10 cases." Also important to consider in the connection to the of clearing shadow to increased development is Wilber's recognition that:

... development includes the essential *inside* story of the growth --and dysfunctions --of my 'I'... especially in its early stages, the 1st-person I can be damaged, showing up later as 3rd-person symptoms and shadows within my 1st person awareness. (p.125)

So we have positioned shadow as a part of the "inside story of growth," which for our purposes makes up the phenomenological body, or how it feels to be embodied in our sensory bodies. From this, we can more specifically position shadow as a "self-contraction" or an obstruction of self and, consequently the Self. Accordingly, the ability to reintegrate shadow means to realize more Self or Spirit.

It is important to note, standard developmental psychology says the ego structure arises early in healthy development from an undifferentiated state, to organize and construct the individual self. This self contraction that leads to individuality and the expression of the unique self, is wholly healthy and proper, noting of course the natural, healthy tendency of the governing ego structure to regulate its environment of subtle energies with the regulating of those self perceived as threatening. Put another way, it is part of the normal developmental process for the ego structure to censor threatening thoughts, feelings, and beliefs the undermine the ability of the self organism to function in its perceived environment.

### Embodied Beings

#### *Body*

Humans experience life through the primary vehicle of their body. This embodiment requires all perspective and perception to be experienced through that body. The body as a fleshy vehicle equipped with sensory and perception organs is not a new idea. Our sensory education starts early; the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin and their complimentary sensory inputs of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch are part of any elementary education. But there are deeper connections to be brought to light and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen in her study of what she calls "Body-Mind Centering" explores the complex relationship between sensory and perceiving with illuminating detail, dating our first perceptual experiences even earlier than the intellectual introduction of these sensory abilities in our first elementary experiences. According to Cohen we lead off our sensory experience with a body centered perspective (p. 115), "Movement is the first perception." Explicit here is the idea that touch is how we begin our sensory exploration of the world. Even fetal growth points to this primacy of touch, "Nerves myelinate in order of their importance for survival. The Vestibular Nerves begin to myelinate in utero by registering the movement of the fetus and its environment (mother)." This body supported empirical evidence validates the claims Cohen makes regarding the placement of perception as a primary and fundamental aspect of experiencing in an embodied state. She has further stated (p. 115):

Not only is movement a perceptions, but as the first perception of learning, it plays an important role in establishing the baseline for our concept or process of perceiving. *This original process of perception then becomes incorporated into the development of the other perceptions.* (Italics added for emphasis.)

She goes on to detail the sensory organs that contribute to this perception, of note being, "The vestibular mechanism located in the inner ear [that] receives information from the proprioceptors, interoceptors and kinesthetic receptors throughout the body and from gravity, space and time." It is the inner ear that carries structures that allow us to know our spatial and temporal environment. The beginnings of this are in the womb (p. 117), "...the baby perceives the movement of its mother as inseparable from itself. Both in and out of the uterus, we are registering the movement of the Earth and the universe...." So early perception through the sensory body lays the foundation for future perceiving of our environment and our relationship to it.

Cohen's sensory model (2008, p. 117) unfolds the origami interaction between mind and body with her observations of preconceived expectation and pre-motor focusing. (Italics added for emphasis.)

[1] *Preconceived expectation*-- [2] *Pre-motor focusing*-- [3] Sensory input--  
 [4] Perceptual interpretation-- [5] Motor-planning-- [6] Motor response--  
 [7] Sensory feedback-- [8] Perceptual interpretation.

We find our sensory organs dependent on the filter of the [1] *Preconceived expectation* stage followed by the [2] *Pre-motor focusing* stage. I suggest it is at the [1] Preconceived expectation stage, that the limitations of both developmental constraints and some shadow are initially enacted. These limitations could also have a secondary influence and observational opportunity at [4] Perceptual interpretation stage. Developmentally we know from Robert Kegan's subject/object theory that awareness unfolds over time to be more inclusive of perspectives as subject is made object. While it is enacted below and hidden from the conscious level of thought and awareness, [1] *Preconceived expectations* are derived from experience. Cohen has stated (p. 5), "We develop preconceived expectations based upon how we have perceived similar information in our past experiences."

And so with our first body perceptions in the womb, we begin to lay down our own personal karmic grooves that will influence all perception to follow. We continue to trace the way of embodiment through the aspects of mind.

### *Mind*

A human's first person felt experience and rational ability is, according to Mark Johnson of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Oregon, irrevocably tied to, or more aptly stated, *embodied* in the sensory body. He has boldly stated (p. 19), "Our embodiment shapes both *what* and *how* we experience, think, mean, imagine, reason, and communicate." Philosophy, so typically a fully rational endeavor, is commonly far removed from the domain of the body as Johnson confirms, "From a philosophical point of view, one of the hardest tasks you will ever face is coming to grips with the fact of your embodiment." He lays this difficulty at the feet of the long honored "disembodied mind and thought that shows itself throughout our intellectual tradition...." Truly, the mainstream Western philosophical tradition of Cartesian dualism is generally accepted and influences on the ground in our practical lives as the mind-body split. Johnson uses the evidence of (p. 21), "...(a) image schemas, (b) controller executing schemas, and (c) primary conceptual metaphors...." to validate his accounting that there is "...no mind without body--a body in continuous interaction with ever-changing environments...." His evidence is impressive and indeed validating, unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this paper to include here completely. A small indication of how this takes shape and what its end looks like is found in this mind-body nugget from Johnson (p. 26), "...The body must recruit neural structures central to sensory and motor processing to carry out the inferences that make up our abstract patterns of thinking. Structures of *perceiving and doing* must serve as structures of *thinking and knowing*."

Thus we find the flesh of the body is irrevocably tied to the body's sensory-motor neural pathways that in turn allow for the generation of abstract thought, or mind. With our first perception of touch in our mother's womb begins the matrix of perception in the subtle body on which "perceiving and doing," and "thinking and knowing" work in concert to create the practical embodied experience of being human in body.

#### Putting It All Together - An Example

We have seen that the sensory body (UR) and the phenomenological body (UL) are the combination of the sensory equipment (UR) of the body, and the consciousness that enlivens that fleshy equipment to give rise to the felt experience (UL) that Cohen and Johnson have labeled with a variety of terms whether it be perceiving, thinking, acting, or knowing. I have suggested

that shadow acts as constriction on the [1] preconceived expectations stage of Cohen's sensory model and by doing so limits the range of consciousness available to an individual's awareness and ultimately overall development by the same action.

A brief illustration will put this all together for us. Let us consider a child conceived late in life. There is an amniocentesis performed and the baby is nicked by the needle. In my experience it takes far less than this to instill shock and fear, really only mother experiencing the feeling strongly will do it, but for our purposes we will use a strong sensory aggravator. From this experience arises a suppressed emotional pattern or belief of "I can never be safe" accompanied by a strong emotion of shock associated with fear. As an adult we may find this individual to have a limited available perceptual capacity as it relates to the [1] preconceived expectation stage. It is likely there would be a tendency to expect threatening circumstances to arise out of the environment, but it would also tend to draw the [2] pre-motor focusing to this same conclusion. For instance, the eyes would be drawn to the shadow in the alley and miss completely the kindly matron standing in the doorway ready to offer directions. We can further suggest that even when the kindly matron sees this individual's distress and steps out to offer help, the [4] perceptual interpretation stage will be limited in its capacity of seeing, resulting in the individual being startled and frightened further, rushing on to avoid the danger.

#### Conclusion

We have seen that considered together, using the tools of Integral Theory, the sensory body (UR) and the phenomenological body (UL) provide a functional device for considering the placement of shadow in the perception to action sequence. We have seen then that shadow constricts aspects of Cohen's sensory model, functionally suppressing awareness, and subsequently, consciousness from which all aspects of self arises. I have suggested and shown that it is possible for the impingement of shadow to inhibit any and all developmental lines from cognition to moral, to artistic, to ego-development through its influence on Cohen's sensory model and Johnson's interpretation of embodied mind. While this exposition has been cursory at best, it points the way to the importance of the presence of shadow in developmental growth trajectories.

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