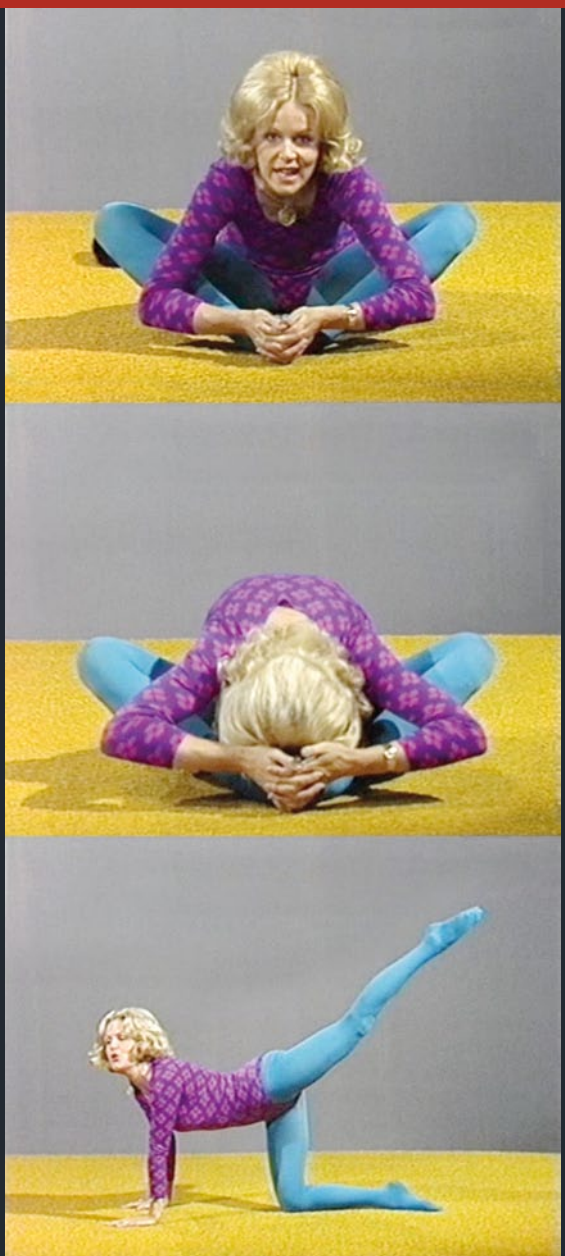
Yoga Traveling

Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective

Beatrix Hauser *Editor*



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Introduction: Transcultural Yoga(s). Analyzing a Traveling Subject

Beatrix Hauser

Abstract This book focuses on yoga's transcultural dissemination in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the course of this process, the term "yoga" has been associated with various distinctive blends of mental and physical exercises performed to achieve improvement in terms of esotericism, fitness, self-actualization, body aesthetics, or health care. This introductionary chapter surveys the development of modern yoga studies as a new field of academic inquiry in the humanities and social sciences. It shows how the emergence and diversity of today's postural yoga provides rich source material for understanding the process of cultural diffusion and knowledge transfer. With a cursory glance at the sources and approaches in the historical and philological study of Indian yoga the chapter then argues that yoga never constituted a monolithic or homogenious entity. The remaining section explores how recent ways of theorizing global spaces, transnational flows, and cultural interactions can inspire and facilitate the analysis of present-day yoga and its dynamics and thus provide a provisional outline for the notion of transculturality in relation to the study of yoga's global circulation. This leads to a brief synopsis of the following chapters.

> *There are more flavors of Hatha Yoga in the West than ice cream.*
>
> Choudhury 2000, xiii
>
> *There is probably no tradition that has been construed as more timeless, more intrinsically authentic, more inherently Indian than yoga.*
>
> Alter 2004, 14

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With reference to its Indian origin, yoga has become a mainstream activity in many parts of the world.[1] Today the term is applied to a variety of bodily practices commodified in the name of spirituality, lifestyle, and health. Positioned at the beginning of the twenty-first century, yoga is also big business in the wellness sector: according to the 2008 *Yoga in America* market survey, Americans spent $5.7 billion per year on yoga classes and products, almost double the amount from the previous survey (2004) and it is still on the rise.[2] Claiming a piece of the pie, the Indian Ministry of Tourism showcases yoga in its advertisement of India as a contemporary healthcare destination.[3] If one considers globalization in terms of cultural flows rather than economic markets, yoga provides rich source material for understanding the process of knowledge transfer—preached, exported, translated, appropriated, touted, assimilated, and modified at various stages along its world-wide journey. In the course of this process, the term yoga has been associated with various distinctive blends of mental and physical exercise performed in order to achieve some sort of improvement—or even perfection—whether conceived of in terms of esotericism, fitness, self-actualization, body aesthetics, or healthcare. The essays in this volume seek to explore some of the turning points in yoga's historico-spatial itinerary and their relevance to its current boom. The authors focus on central motivations, sites, and agents in the circulation of posture-based yoga as well as on its successive (re-)interpretation and diversification, touching upon questions such as: Why has yoga taken its various forms? How do time and place influence its meanings, social roles, and associated experiences? How does the transfer into new settings affect the ways in which yogic practice has been conceptualized as a system (its ontological status)? On what basis is it still identified as (Indian) yoga? The analytic perspective used to tackle these questions is inspired by recent debates on transcultural phenomena; namely, the conviction that simplistic notions of culture as a territorially bounded and homogeneous social entity and derivative concepts such as diffusion and acculturation are insufficient to conceptualize the dynamics and plurality of yoga and the network of practitioners that exist in today's globalized world.

The triumphal course of yoga around the globe started more than a hundred years ago. Its beginning is generally associated with the Hindu reformer Swami

[1] This introduction has greatly benefited from Suzanne Newcombe's and Anne Koch's critical reading and feedback of an early draft. My sincere thanks go also to the two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions.

[2] The 2008 *Yoga in America* market study surveyed 5,050 respondents and was conducted on behalf of the *Yoga Journal*. Whereas the number of yoga practitioners (15.8 million) had stabilized vis-à-vis the journal's previous 2004 survey, the expenditure on equipment, clothing, vacations, and media had almost doubled (www.yogajournal.com/advertise/press_releases/10, accessed 17 January 2011). On the growth and marketing of yoga in the United States see Syman (2010); also Philp's book *Yoga Inc.* (2009), which is based on journalistic research.

[3] The Indian government promotes yoga as a "tourism product" along with Ayurveda and medical treatments (e.g., surgery, transplantation, dental care) on its website at http://www.incredibleindia.org; see also http://indiameditourism.com (accessed 17 January 2011); and see Nichter's contribution (chapter "The Social Life of Yoga: Exploring Transcultural Flows in India").

Vivekananda and his speech at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago (1893). Vivekananda's interest in yoga was motivated by the reformist search for cultural roots that could provide a modern vision of Hinduism. In his view, yoga could function as a form of applied philosophy suitable for the liberation of lay people committed to both contemplative and scientific thinking (first and foremost the Hindu elite who favored monistic Neo-Vedānta). However, his image of Hinduism also reflected contemporaneous elements of Western esotericists' interest in the sacred wisdom of India.[4] Vivekananda saw yoga as the path to "self-realization," a means for unlocking the potential divinity of a single human being and thereby also serving society as a whole. With these aims in mind he promoted *Raja Yoga* (published 1896; literally, "Royal Yoga") as the supreme path to liberation—alongside the yoga of true knowledge, devotion, and righteous action. Referencing a collection of aphorisms called the *Yogasūtra* (circa second/third century CE[5]), Vivekananda conceived of Raja Yoga as a spiritual and rather disembodied discipline that focused on meditation (*dhyāna*), concentration of mind (*dhārana*), the withdrawal of senses (*pratyāhāra*), and ethical rules (*yama* and *niyama*—in short: prohibitions and obligations) rather than on the performance of a series of postures (*āsana*). A healthy body served as the precondition for this soteriological encounter, but not as an end in itself. Like his contemporaries, Vivekananda was rather critical of wandering yogis who publicly demonstrated their ability to perform acrobatic postures and "magic." In British India these yogis were condemned for their apparent this-worldly objectives, manipulative powers, and impure if not criminal practices. Against this backdrop, educated Hindus developed their own vision of true yoga.[6]

Around the same time, India was also impacted by the international physical culture movement, which led to the recognition of new athletic regimens.[7] In keeping with principles espoused by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), physical strength gained social value by virtue of its capacity to ward off the degeneracy of modern times. And freestanding gymnastic exercises aimed at the holistic development of mind, body, and spirit (inspired by the work of Pehr Henrik Ling), as well as calisthenic training (common in the British military), were introduced into the Indian educational system.[8] Joseph Alter's sophisticated study on *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* (2004) demonstrates how in the 1920s those physical yoga exercises and acrobatic postures

[4] This is convincingly argued by De Michelis (2004).

[5] As with other early Indic sources, it is difficult to date the *Yogasūtra*. In this case estimates range from the fourth to the second century BCE, to as late as 150–500 CE. According to Whicher (1998, 41–42), Michaels (2004, 267) and Gharote et al. (2006, xxvi) current evidence suggests that the *Yogasūtra* as a collection was compiled between the second/third century CE and only in retrospect ascribed to Patañjali.

[6] Singleton (2010, Chap. 2) and White (2009, 2012a, 15).

[7] See also Singleton's contribution in this volume (chapter "Transnational Exchange and the Genesis of Modern Postural Yoga").

[8] Singleton (2010, Chaps. 4, 5, and 6).

silenced by Vivekananda became the subject of laboratory research and therapeutic use and were, with patriotic zeal, identified as the Indian equivalent to Ling's movement cure. By establishing through scientific means the physiological benefits and efficacy of yoga postures, contractions, and purificatory procedures, Indian scholars hoped to substantiate the truth of ancient Hindu wisdom. [9] Alter argues that this medicalization of posture practice was crucial for the emergence of what is today known as Hatha Yoga.[10] Mark Singleton's *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (2010) complements and expands upon Alter's work by exploring the various discourses, motivations, and contexts that shaped yoga into the particular form that existed in India by 1940; a yoga that had by then absorbed several strands of physical culture. In a largely nationalistic and partly anti-colonial spirit, the (new) performance of yoga exercises had developed into a system for gaining a strong physique and enhancing one's manliness. Static postures (*āsana*), energy locks (*bandha*), and breathing techniques (*prāṇayāma*) were supplemented by calisthenic and cardiovascular exercises based on muscle contraction and repetition. These aerobic exercises included the sun salutation (*sūryanamaskār*), the "Hindu push-up" (*daṇḍa* – Hindi: *daṇḍ*), elements of local physical culture (from *vyāyām*, wrestling; and other martial arts), as well as foreign exercises that originated in gymnastics and muscle control (promoted in India by world-famous bodybuilders active at time).[11] Due to royal patronage, one of the main centers of this yoga renaissance and transformation was Mysore, where several present-day yoga gurus acquired their proficiency.[12] By the time of India's independence in 1947 this new hybrid form was called Hatha Yoga, henceforth the key designation used to distinguish a "secularized," body-oriented yoga from its alleged counterpart: "spiritual," metaphysical yoga. Yet in a strict sense, even primarily physical (Neo-)Hatha Yoga[13] incorporates esoteric ideas: today's emphasis on relaxation, intuition, positive thinking, mental healing, and harmony can be traced back to late nineteenth-century Euro-American esotericists and psychologists and their interpretation of Hindu spirituality.[14] Singleton concludes that posture-based yoga was the result of a "dialogical exchange between para-religious, modern body culture techniques developed in the West and the various discourses of 'modern' Hindu yoga." He also argues that despite frequent reference to ancient Indian scriptures and medieval body-oriented *haṭhayoga* "contemporary posture-based yoga cannot really be considered a direct successor of this tradition."[15] Furthermore, postural

[9] On science as a hegemonic force producing asymmetries between Western and non-Western approaches to the world see Alter (2004, 17, 28–31).

[10] Alter (2004, 77).

[11] See Sjoman (1996, 53–58), Alter (2004, 28), and Singleton (2010, 198–206). On various Indian forms of exercises see Alter (1992, Chap. 5); on the sun salutation see Goldberg (2006), Bühnemann (2007, 32–33), and Alter (2004, 23).

[12] Sjoman (1996).

[13] I owe the term "Neo-Hatha Yoga" to De Michelis (2004).

[14] Singleton (2005, 2007).

[15] Singleton (2010, 5). The phrase *haṭhayoga* originated from medieval tantric sources, e.g., the fourteenth-century treatise *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*.

yoga was limited to exclusivist circles of young men and by no means a common practice in pre-independence India.

These are just two glimpses from the entangled transnational history of today's yoga. An awareness of these twists and turns in the interpretation of what yoga is and does opened up a new field of academic inquiry: the "present's just past" of yoga (to use Alter's expression), which was still pervaded by vague memories, oral accounts, and hence a high degree of looseness. Elizabeth De Michelis' groundbreaking study on *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (2004) deserves credit for outlining what is now generally termed "modern yoga studies" as a subject in the humanities and social sciences. In quick succession, several scholars convincingly argued that the stereotype of a modernized yoga adapted to "Western rationalism," vis-à-vis a mystical Hindu past was not only naive, but a myth. Their studies emphasized the ways in which modernity was already present in nineteenth-century Indian notions of yoga and that assumptions based upon a concept of yoga as a coherent historical tradition lacked factual foundation. In light of these findings, today's global image of Hatha Yoga as a gentle, recreational, feminized, pacifist, and non-competitive practice reflects fairly recent discursive strands rather than any inherent and/or elemental features of yoga. Therefore, if one takes a closer look at the social phenomena of postural yoga as they developed over the last decades one is invariably led to analyze the production of values, practices, networks, spaces, and perspectives that transcend national borders and are, in fact, generated vis-à-vis an idealized Other associated with Indianness.

In late 2009, an interdisciplinary group of scholars from Europe and the United States met at the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University in order to discuss the specifics of present-day yoga and its global appeal. They investigated questions such as: For what reasons do people engage in yoga classes? How did particular social environments shape the practice of yoga and how did these situated practices in turn influence the perception and experience of body and self? In what ways has the spread of yoga served as a social and cultural incentive that inspires and reorients general ways of thinking about health and human well-being? The present volume is the result of this intellectual encounter.[16] The collection begins by looking at some historical issues: first, the transnational genesis of modern postural yoga in India (Singleton); second, the overlapping subcultures interested in yoga and magic in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century (Newcombe); and third, the impact of imagined *kuṇḍāliṇī* experiences on Western psychology as a discipline and on psychotherapeutic diagnosis (Hofmann). The next section focuses on contrasting and inconsistent receptions and (re)shapings of global postural yoga in Germany. It thereby

[16] Special thanks to Pirkko Markula (University of Alberta) and Klas Nevrin (Stockholm University) for their substantial contributions to the conference's debates and outcome. I am very happy that Mark Singleton joined this book project to present his recent research, unpublished at the time of the Heidelberg conference.

offers clues for understanding the production of situated meanings that are located at the interface of local and global spheres. The authors emphasize the impact of yoga instruction as a sociolinguistic genre on the perception of body and self (Hauser); the choice of yoga practice as an individualized strategy for coping with the pressures of a post-Fordist labor market (Schnäbele); and the sociopolitical conditions under which (until recently) yoga classes in German schools had to be disguised in order to bypass widespread concerns against yoga as cult (Augenstein). The last part of the book explores perspectives held by transnational networks of yoga consumers: their recent affiliation with the ecology movement (Strauss and Mandelbaum); the co-creation of an Indian idealized yoga-location by tourists and local entrepreneurs (Nichter); and the production of social, human, and body capital by means of joining a local yoga studio or international yoga retreat (Koch). Apart from a shared academic interest in the worldwide dissemination of bodily practices associated with yoga, the authors clearly differ in their use of the transcultural lens; a lens that provides descriptive terms, serves as a heuristic concept for understanding the motors and dynamics of globalization, or sets its sights on a larger epistemological landscape. Although extensive discussions followed the conference sessions, this collection does not seek to level the differences that arose. In fact they serve as useful representations of the participants' various disciplinary perspectives, located in social anthropology, sociology, psychology, history of religions, and education.

Although yoga constitutes a case in point to consider the transnational flow of ideas about spirituality, health, and well-being; to conceive of yoga as a social practice that has been negotiated, reframed, and partly invented in the last 100–150 years is highly contested. Doing so may not only challenge the experiential reality of yoga practitioners (by virtue of emphasizing its discursive nature) or upset those who hold the *Yogasūtra* in high esteem for its wisdom and timeless truth. Most notably the commodification and business opportunities associated with yoga have caused a series of proprietary claims on yoga-related goods and services: in the United States alone, 2,315 yoga trademarks, 150 yoga-related copyrights, and 134 patents for yoga accessories have been registered by 2005.[17] And in 2008, the Indian government began to register yoga postures in the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) in order to substantiate their Indianness and thus prevent sly entrepreneurs from patenting cultural know-how as their own.[18]

[17] See Fish (2006, 192) who relies on David Orr's article in *The Telegraph*, dated 20 September 2005 (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/3324013/India-adopts-fighting-position-to-hold-on-to-ancient-yoga-poses.html, accessed 1 March 2011). Unfortunately, Orr neither provides the source of his data nor over which time span it is based. According to R. Saha and Sangeeta Nagar at the Patent Facilitating Centre in Delhi, devices for yoga practice (rather than yogic exercises) have been patented in the United States since 1978 (http://www.indianpatents.org.in/yogic_june06.htm, accessed 15 May 2012).

[18] The TKDL is intended to protect various kinds of cultural knowledge and houses several projects. The initiative to register yoga postures is a collaborative project run by the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Department of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) and the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY) in Delhi; see http://www.tkdl.res.in/tkdl/langdefault/common/Abouttkdl.asp?GL=Eng (accessed 22 February 2011).

Furthermore, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) launched a campaign to "Take Back Yoga," claiming the Vedic origin and fundamentally Hindu character of today's posture practice.[19] In light of these realities, it is important to clarify here that the authors of this book do not appoint themselves as judges of questions of ownership, authenticity, or the morals of transnational appropriations; rather, their aim is to describe and analyze social phenomena that are part of a globalized world. In one way or another, their analyses all share the common theoretical supposition that cultural practices are not static but inherently hybrid and prone to change. Moreover, some of the authors have practiced yoga for many years and wish to reflect upon their own insights, this time from an academic perspective.

Mapping Diversity, Dynamics, and History

This book connects to the growing field of modern yoga studies in the humanities and social sciences. One of the first scholars to define this new field in its development over time and also its systematic breadth was Elizabeth De Michelis.[20] She provided terminology that was extremely useful as an introduction to the subject matter and as such it was quickly taken up by others. De Michelis regards modern yoga (in her spelling Modern Yoga) as the product of an interaction that began in the mid-nineteenth century between Western esotericists interested in Hinduism and the more or less Western-educated Indian reformers associated with the Hindu Renaissance.[21] Analyzing several forms of yoga that originated and flourished in and beyond India in the decades after Vivekananda's speech at the World's Parliament of Religions, De Michelis identifies two major developmental strands: that of "modern psychosomatic yoga" (MPsY) and that of "modern denominational yoga" (MDY). Whereas the first category refers to a gradual secularization and medicalization of posture practice and breathing techniques, thus a movement that is only loosely structured and socially fluid, the latter category comprises several sectarian groups in which particular yoga practices—observances, controlled breathing, and meditation—are central to their specific belief systems.[22] In the post-World War II era, these modern psychosomatic forms developed along opposite trajectories: De Michelis classifies those yoga schools emphasizing physical practice as "modern postural yoga" (MPY) and distinguishes them from "modern

[19] See Meera Nanda on "'Owning' Yoga." in *Himāl* (www.himalmag.com/component/content/article/3550-owning-yoga.html, accessed 1 March 2011).

[20] For helpful overviews on the growing number of historical, sociological, and anthropological studies on modern yoga see De Michelis (2007), Newcombe (2009).

[21] De Michelis (2004, 2); in Chap. 6 she gives a detailed account of her taxonomic divisions.

[22] Examples of the latter category (MDY) are the Brahma Kumaris and Sahaja Yoga.

meditational yoga" (MMY) in which mental practices are stressed.[23] Following this typology, the recent worldwide yoga boom is clearly linked to "modern postural yoga" (MPY).

The contrast between meditative techniques identified as yoga and rather mundane yoga postures has been noted by academic scholars and yoga enthusiasts alike. The difference correlates historically to the distinction between Raja Yoga as a largely mental discipline promoted by Vivekananda and the concept of (Neo-) Hatha Yoga, which focuses on body practice and kinesthetic experience. However, this distinction is more schematic than real. "In yoga," Alter argued, "it is pointless to try to define where physical exercise ends and mental meditation begins," due to the Hindu notion that mind and body are intrinsically linked.[24] Mental activity is subsumed under the physical as one of many senses, constituting a perceptual reality that stands in contrast to the potential achievement of disengaged higher consciousness.[25] From this perspective, yogic discipline cannot manifest purely as an objectification of the body, it is equally conceived as a subjectification of the self.[26] Also, with regard to the anthropological paradigm of embodiment, one could classify meditation and purification techniques as bodily practice because both require "somatic attention" (Csordas).[27] De Michelis' ideal-typical categories thus have a weakness since they imply a vital difference in approaching yoga as belief system *or* as a set of physical exercises.[28] Although this distinction does indeed reflect a particular modern discourse on yoga, to oppose these categories altogether is problematic, both in the Indian context and in the allegedly secularized, late modern, post-industrial settings where the boundaries between health behavior, self-cultivation, and religious aspirations are increasingly blurred, where there is often no clear line between spiritual practice and psychosomatic self-help.[29] Moreover, De Michelis' model did not account for those representations of yoga that circulate primarily in India (e.g., yoga championships or the politicization of yoga), a constraint she herself mentions.[30] Although her typology was extremely helpful in opening the field of modern yoga studies, the categories she outlined quickly reached their analytical limits. While they exemplify common ways that

[23] According to De Michelis, Iyengar Yoga is a paradigmatic form of MPY, whereas the yoga of Chinmoy can be classified as MMY.

[24] Alter (1997, 92).

[25] White (2012a, 7).

[26] Alter (1992, 92).

[27] For the concept of embodiment see Csordas (1990, 1993).

[28] In search of a descriptive model to map coexisting and partly overlapping forms of modern yoga, one might more appropriately view the "spiritual" and the "physical" as the x and the y axis in a coordinate system, charting each variant of yoga along these axes.

[29] The emergence and glorification of self-care in post-traditional societies has been explored by Ziguras (2004). The assumption of a particular Hindu view, however, recalls the difficulties in defining Hinduism (see Lipner 2004; Malinar 2009).

[30] De Michelis (2004, 189). In 2008 De Michelis suggests a fifth category: the "Neo-Hindu style of Modern Yoga" (2008, 22) including, for instance, mass yoga camps in a Hindu-nationalist spirit (Alter 2008).

yoga schools distance themselves from each other (i.e., emic arguments that constitute a distinct discursive field), they do not help theorize the multiple and competing logics used to interpret and circulate yoga, or the ambivalent manifestations and shifts in overall systemic orientation (its ontological status) that occur while practices and ideas remain. The mimetic process of deciphering and encoding yoga escapes a simplistic dialectic of mind and body, religious versus secular. However, in fairness to De Michelis' intent, the proposed terms were meant as provisional and "convenient" working concepts that in spite of their capital letters were not put forth as dogmatic and absolute types.[31] Her contribution should be understood as an invitation for further elaboration and verification.

Several works have been published on the twentieth-century dissemination of yoga within particular national contexts, such as within Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[32] These studies, written from the scholarly perspective of the host nation, either implied or explicitly suggested that a hitherto foreign set of ideas and/or practices were part of a gradual process of cultural absorption. With regard to yoga in post-World War II Germany, Christian Fuchs identified four periods: (1) the "consolidation" of dispersed individuals interested in yoga from 1945 to 1955; (2) the "institutionalization" of yoga instruction between 1956 and 1966; (3) the emergence and "organization" of a yoga movement between 1967 and 1979; and (4) the "professionalization" of teacher training and quality management between 1980 and 1990.[33] With regard to the United Kingdom, De Michelis distinguished three different time periods: (1) the "popularization" of yoga from the 1950s to mid-1970s; (2) the "consolidation" from the mid-1970s to late 1980s; and (3) the "acculturation" of yoga from the late 1980s to date.[34] These types of regional studies are of great significance since they highlight the social conditions that invited and accompanied the gradual acceptance of yoga in the Western hemisphere. Yet by their emphasis on stages of cultural integration they tend to suggest a strict bilateralism and a one-way diffusion that proves delusive to any systematic analysis of multidirectional flows and transnational developments. Although the spread of yoga differed historically from country to country—for instance in regards to the yoga pioneers who shaped the initial yoga imagery in Germany and in Britain—it would be incongruous to conceive of an explicit British yoga practice or the Germanization of Indian yoga.[35] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, no fixed set of ready-made mind-body techniques existed for export to the West prior to this transcultural encounter.

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[31] De Michelis (2004, 7).

[32] See Fuchs (1990, 2006), cf. Schnäbele (2010), De Michelis (2004), Newcombe (2007, 2008), Ceccomori (2001), and Syman (2010).

[33] Fuchs (1990, slightly extended in 2006) uses the German terms: *Konsolidierung, Institutionalisierung, Organisation, Professionalisierung*.

[34] De Michelis (2004).

[35] In the 1960s, yoga in Germany was mainly Sivananda Yoga, whereas in Britain Iyengar Yoga dominated.

Some recent research has focused on yoga practitioners and their long-distance travel, engaged upon improving not only posture practices but also the self. The quintessential destination of this "pilgrimage" is, not surprisingly, India.[36] Social anthropologist Sarah Strauss followed visitors of the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, India back to their respective home countries and explored the ways in which they integrated and transformed yoga and notions of yogic life in their everyday life. Following the various strands of this global network she conducted multi-sited fieldwork in India, Switzerland, Germany, and the United States, evaluated in *Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures* (2005). Although this study only cursorily refers to Indian yoga practitioners, Strauss makes an important point: whereas Indians practitioners appreciated (Neo-)Hatha Yoga for its scientifically proven efficacy, non-Indian followers regarded yoga as a metonym for spirituality and valued its holistic dimension.[37] In other words, the same type of yoga knowledge and exercise that was taught at one exemplary site was seemingly framed in at least two different ways—and probably produced contrasting experiences to some extent. Regrettably, it was beyond the scope of Strauss' investigation to analyze the underlying reasons for these experiential differences; instead, the spread of Sivananda Yoga Centers into several countries seemed to indicate the existence of a globally shared yoga culture that transcended national boundaries. Similarly, the geographer Anne-Cécile Hoyez provided a multilayered analysis of how the circulation of yoga influenced the social construction of global space, considering the world-wide distribution of yoga centers, the travel routes of yoga gurus and practitioners, the spread of yoga providers and its impact on urban landscapes, as well as the influence of regular yoga practice on spatial categories at home.[38] Although based on interviews with yoga practitioners in France and India (including tourists), her study shows how the circulation of yoga cannot be reduced to bilateral relations but is linked with overlapping national and global networks, discourses on the historic spread of yoga, and also the symbolism of yoga places, here understood in reference to Gesler's "therapeutic landscapes,"[39] Hoyez shows how the identification of ailments and medical preferences correlate with the assessment of environmental features of yoga ashrams (in India, the United States, and South Africa) that were considered and compared in terms of their therapeutic potential, that is to say as socially negotiated global imaginaries. However, both Strauss and Hoyez are silent in regards the asymmetries involved in these transnational productions. For example, these global sites of yoga—whether in India or elsewhere—are neither created nor shared with equal means: who is in the position to travel, to define, to push, to communicate, to translate?

Both the speed of information flows and the mobility of people have unquestionably accelerated tremendously since the 1990s, and new analytic models have

[36] On the concept of pilgrimage in this context see Burger (2006).

[37] Strauss (2005, 116).

[38] Hoyez (2005).

[39] Hoyez (2007).

been developed to grasp the dynamics of a cultural interconnectedness that now clearly goes beyond geographic and national boundaries. But before I turn our attention toward the ways in which these challenging circumstances, concepts, and theoretical models are addressed and reflected upon in this volume, let me provide a few historical notes on yoga and cultural change—although space does not permit a comprehensive overview of yoga scholarship undertaken by Indologists and historians of religion.[40]

Sources and Approaches in the Study of Indian Yoga

The emphasis in this collection of essays on yoga's transcultural trajectory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries does not stem from an assumption that contemporary yoga inherently differs from past practice by virtue of the (in)consistency of transmission. Cultural change did not interrupt one homogeneous practice of yoga at only one point in time; therefore, today's yoga cannot be read in reductive fashion as a consequence only of globalization, of modernity, or of British colonialism. More accurately, several indicators show that the historical development of yoga was itself transient, fragmented, ambiguous, and subject to alteration.[41] Contrary to popular belief or self-proclaimed adherence to an ancient Indian tradition, even premodern yoga cannot be understood as a singular, cohesive system. Imagining the development of yoga as a family tree with Indian roots, a substantial trunk of "tradition," and several more or less globalized branches is a modern trope for a complex formation that more appropriately resembles a huge banyan tree with several intermingled aerial roots that make it difficult to recognize where the tree begins and where it ends, how it is absorbed by other plants, and that it may, in fact, be the product of multiple distant origins.[42]

From the perspective of Indologists, the metamorphosis and plural meanings associated with "yoga" correlate with the general vagueness and semantic breadth of the term itself. In *Yoga in Practice* (2012), David White states that "every group in every age has created its own version and vision of yoga."[43] He goes on to point out that the range of meanings associated with the term "yoga" is wider than for almost any other word in the Sanskrit lexicon. More than 3,000 years ago—long

[40] For further readings see Whicher (1998), Whicher and Carpenter (2003), Jacobsen (2005), Samuel (2008), and White (2012b), to mention only a few recent publications.

[41] Jacobsen (2005, 17), Whicher and Carpenter (2003, 1), Singleton and Byrne (2008b, 5), Samuel (2008, 178), and White (2012a, 2).

[42] In popular yoga literature the simplified genealogical tree is commonly used: see Tietke (2007) in his "5000 years" [sic] of yoga. Recently, Lipner (2004), 24 employed the banyan metaphor to explain Hinduism(s).

[43] White (2012a, 2). In the following I shall focus on semantics relevant to grasp the development of modern Hatha Yoga. For lack of space I do not elaborate on interlinked concepts such as *bhaktiyoga*, *jñanayoga*, *karmayoga*, *rājayoga* and others whose meanings were subject of several classical and medieval Indian texts.

before a recognizable system called yoga had emerged—the term was used for yoking an animal and for the yoke itself. It was also a metaphor for a time of war (in reference to the yoke on a warhorse).[44] Even when the term began to appear regularly in Sanskrit literature (between 300 BCE to 400 CE) it meant many different things and "union"—a common translation in today's yoga manuals—was only one of many interpretive options. According to White, yoga has variously signified:

> a conjunction of planets, … a constellation, … [a mixture of] substances, … a device, a recipe, a method, a strategy, a charm, an incantation, fraud, a trick, an endeavor, a combination, … an arrangement, zeal, care, diligence, industriousness, discipline, use, application, contact, a sum total, and the Work [sic] of alchemists. [45]

Yet even this list does not exhaust the meanings that have existed over time. Thus, it is by no means clear that the notion of yoga as it appears in a given primary source refers to the same subject matter when found in another manuscript assembled thousands of years later. Very likely we are also faced with a multiple homonym so that broad clusters of semantic meaning emerge only in relation to specific groups of texts.[46]

For the reasons stated above, the main current in linguistic yoga research follows a hermeneutic approach, seeking to evaluate yoga as a historical and pluralistic phenomenon. There is a rich collection of Indic scripture that variously concentrates on yoga and invites a broad spectrum of interpretations. Whether and in what respect this scriptural knowledge reflected ascetic ideals, religious practice, or metaphysical concepts is disputed. [47] Apart from celebrated root texts like the *Yogasūtra* and sections of the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Upaniṣad*, the main texts that relate to modern posture practice appeared between 1350 and 1850 CE.[48] Referencing a tantric theory of the human body with its energy centers (*cakra*) and energy channels (*nāḍi*), they promote the manipulation of the physique and codify yoga as a system of purificatory techniques, controlled breathing, and postures—thus constituting what came to be known as the (tantric) *haṭhayoga* tradition. *Haṭhayoga* literally means "violent effort" or "the yoga of force," suggesting increased self-mastery for attaining a goal, possibly supernatural powers, immunity from illness, or immortality if not outright union with god. According to Jason Birch the main implication of describing this type of yoga as forceful is, however, an allusion to the tremendous effects of its techniques.[49]

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid; for a present-day lexicon entry "yoga" and its diverse meanings see Alter (2004, 11).

[46] Singleton (2010, 15).

[47] On the *Yogasūtra* and its interpretation see Whicher (1998); for other foundational and "classical" yoga texts see White (2012b).

[48] Sjoman 1996; some Indologists assume that what came to be known as the tantric tradition was antedated by the practices of renouncers between 900 and 1200 (see overview by Newcombe 2009, 987), or as early as the sixth century CE (Whicher and Carpenter 2003, 8).

[49] For a profound discussion of the term *haṭhayoga* see Birch (2011); compare the translations by Alter (2004, 24), Bühnemann (2007, 11), Staal (1993, 71), and White (2012a, 15).

Prominent among these texts is the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, a fourteenth-century treatise written from the perspective of a spiritual adept.[50] Other texts such as the *Śivasaṃhitā* and the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* have a distinct literary and philosophical flavor, at times purposely oblique. They were not intended as tutorials but supplemented an embodied tradition that was transmitted from master (*guru*) to lifelong student. These medieval texts seem related to earlier views on yoga in particular as a method for controlling the natural activities of mental organs. Still and all, we must assume that competing meanings did exist since sources use the term in reference to ontologically diverse categories such as a strand of philosophy and also the goal of a specific yogic practice.[51] Hence, text-based hermeneutic interpretation has variously discussed yoga as a philosophical ideal of ascetic living, a theory of consciousness, and a set of guidelines with which to face death.[52] In addition, the scope of primary texts on the subject of yoga can either be widened to include commentaries on associated aspects and topics or limited to only a few major treatises. Similarly, one may focus on pre-*Yogasūtra* sources or on sources ascribed to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or even related to Muslim practice.[53] Therefore, Alter points out that the "somewhat arbitrary" selection of primary texts will influence what aspects dominate the interpretations of yoga.[54] As Ian Whicher and David Carpenter remark, we cannot know what influence these texts actually had, and whether the sources that attracted the most academic attention were indeed authoritative.[55] Whereas colonial India and Hindu reformers valorized some texts—prominently the *Yogasūtra*—others were silenced for their apparently "perverse" content, such as the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*.[56] For these reasons, it is highly problematic to trace modern postural practice back to textual sources, creating linkages that envision a direct line of succession from the *Yogasūtra* to medieval *haṭhayoga* texts and then to the Hindu-reformist visions of true yoga.[57]

One strategy for bypassing the vagueness of the term "yoga" is to focus on the history of actual posture practice by means of scriptural and visual sources that allow for the comparison of *āsana* names, of descriptive remarks, and images. To come straight to the point, even when using this approach it remains difficult to establish a consistent yoga tradition. The early descriptions of *āsana* found in primary sources are very brief; matching the text's poetic meter they are of limited use in identifying a posture. In some manuscripts the illustrations even differ from the textual description altogether; in other examples the procedure for an *āsana* was

[50] The date of the Indian source is disputed (see footnote 5). Here I follow Alter (2004, 21) although Bühnemann (2007, 7) assumes that the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* was composed in the fifteenth/sixteenth century CE.

[51] Jacobson (2005, 4).

[52] See Malinar (2009, 254–256), Jacobson (2005, 9), and Schreiner (2009).

[53] On Islamic thought in relation to yoga see Jacobsen (2005, 19) and White (2012b, Chaps. 7 and 15).

[54] Alter (2004, 20).

[55] Whicher and Carpenter (2003).

[56] See Sjoman (1996, 56) for Dayananda Sarasvati's account on yogis destroying manuscripts of the latter category; cf. Wujastyk (2009, 200–203).

[57] See Sjoman (1996, 37 and 40), Whicher and Carpenter (2003, 6), Bühnemann (2007, 20–21), White (2009, 246–247), Singleton (2010, 5).

changed over time.[58] Most notably, the specific number of canonical postures varied, regardless of the generalized symbolic notion of 84 postures (in some sources listed as 8,400,000).[59] According to the *Yogasūtra*, yoga should be performed in a firm, seated position only so as not to distract the meditating person. Composed roughly a millennium later, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* listed only 15 essential postures; the *Gheraṇḍasaṃitā* would later mention 32; and the *Śivasaṃhitā* a total of 84, describing only four in detail.[60] One well-preserved manuscript dated 1737 substantiated the total of 84 with illustrations of each posture.[61] Another treatise with pictures from the Palace of Mysore (dated 1811–1868) described 122 postures, 80 basic and 42 additional *āsana*, each with a few verses on name and performance.[62] In the twentieth century, we once again find renowned yoga gurus building their fame on 25 postures (Yesudian), or taken to the other extreme on 200 postures plus related exercises (Iyengar).[63] The TKDL, housed under the auspices of the Indian government, has even documented "from antique texts" a total of 900 yoga exercises![64] This raises the question of what is

[58] On the discrepancy between image and textual description see Gharote 2006, xxxii. An example of a changed posture is *kūrmāsana* (tortoise pose): its present-day performance clearly differs from its textual counterpart in the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*.

[59] Bühnemann (2007).

[60] Sjoman (1996), Bühnemann (2007), and Singleton (2010, 29). According to White (2012a, 10, 17) there was reference neither to postures nor controlled breathing in sources antedating the ninth century CE.

[61] Bühneman (2007, 143–145).

[62] Sjoman (1996).

[63] Both yoga gurus published tutorials that were translated into several languages: *Yoga and Health* (Yesudian and Haich 1953, Hungarian original from 1941), and *Light on Yoga* (Iyengar 1966). Since the publication of the latter, Iyengar has continued to develop and vary exercises.

[64] In June 2010, the TKDL had reportedly registered more than 900 postures (see Emily Wax, "The Great Yoga Crackdown," in *The Washington Post*, 23 August 2010; download at http://www.tkdl.res.in/tkdl/langdefault/common/PressCoverage.asp, accessed 12 January 2012). Unfortunately, the TKDL did not provide information in regards to its method of data collection or evaluation. However, on its homepage it lists 38 seemingly authoritative books as "sources of information," all of which are authored, translated, and published by Indians (between 1920 and 2008) and include both historical and modern texts. (http://www.tkdl.res.in/tkdl/langdefault/common/SourceInfo.asp?GL=Eng, accessed 12 January 2012).

This extraordinarily high number of yoga postures is substantiated by the Lonavla Yoga Institute in Pune, India: on behalf of the institute, and subsidized by the Indian government, Manohar Laxman Gharote et al. (2006) compiled an *Encyclopedia of Traditional Asanas* with about 900 entries, including up to 100 different applications of a particular *āsana* and then several entries without any description of the content or technique. This reference book is methodologically problematic because it does not differentiate between *āsana* names used in primary sources, in secondary literature, and in popular twentieth-century books about yoga. For instance, it describes a version of *unmukha-pīṭha* suitable "for the pregnant woman" (Gharote 2006, 326), although before independence women were excluded from learning postural yoga. Elsewhere Gharote (2006, xxxvii) refers to "asanas" from Celtic, Egyptian, and Mexican civilization.

Cf. Bühnemann (2007, 179–290). In her study on yoga postures mentioned in Indian manuscripts between 1625 and 2003, she discovered a total of 351 different *āsana* names, several of which refer to similar postures. Admittedly some positions described in early texts are absent in modern yoga curricula, e.g., *tapakāsana*, hanging upside down by feet tied on a rope see Bühnemann 2007, 51, 151).

considered a yoga posture in comparison to more or less universal human ways of sitting, standing, and flexing (acrobatic artistry aside). Linguistically, one should point out that not every yoga exercise was classified as *āsana* but also as *kriya*, *bandha*, *mudra, pīṭha, niṣadana,* or *aṅgika*.[65] Then again it seems that the term *āsana* (literally: seat, base) became synonymous with the general English notion of "posture" and was used to describe positions in wrestling and archery as well. [66] In fact, this might help explain the ever increasing number of (yoga) exercises. However, while some scholars (prominently Mircea Eliade) and yoga practitioners regard the Harappan seal—with its image of a person sitting knees apart and feet together—as undeniable evidence that places yoga's origin 5,000 years ago, modern yoga studies is faced with the methodological conundrum of differentiating between postures that could be simple bodily movements and/or yoga: between an upright position with both hands stretched upward and *tāḍāsana* (mountain pose); between a headstand and *śīrṣāsana* (literally: head pose); between reclined relaxation and *śavāsana* (corpse pose); or between the splits and *hanumanāsana* (Hanuman/monkey pose), to name only a few.[67]

In order to learn about the lived and embodied practice of yoga in premodern India, White took another approach: he focused on practitioners of yoga as described in medieval narrative accounts rather than giving priority to religio-philosophical source material. In *Sinister Yogis* (2009), White convincingly demonstrates that premodern yogis were regarded as dubious individuals, associated with supernatural powers, prone to take over people's bodies, and thus often objects of dread and fear. In other words, the primary sense of the term yogi was reserved for practitioners of black magic and sorcery. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century did British and anglicized Indian individuals begin to romanticize the yogic lifestyle.[68] According to White, this alternate image of a yogi as someone seated in a fixed posture, regulating his breath, and entering into meditation did not even appear prior to the seventeenth century[69]; and by the late nineteenth century one could no longer find solitary yogis lost in meditation somewhere in a far-off Himalayan cave.[70] According to Knut Jacobsen, most yogis belonged to sectarian organizations that provided a communal lifestyle.[71] In modern India, the most visible successors of the medieval yogis are men of the Nath Yogi order; however, there are also other sectarian groups who conceptualize

[65] Bühnemann (2007, 17) and Gharote et al. (2006, xxvii).

[66] Bühnemann (2007, 17) and Sjoman (1996, 45).

[67] Eliade's view has been taken up in several popular books on yoga, see Tietke (2007). On the meanings and postures associated with *tāḍāsana* see Bühnemann (2007, 162). On the problem of defining a yoga posture vis-à-vis a similar general pose see Singleton's contribution in this volume (chapter "Transnational Exchange and the Genesis of Modern Postural Yoga").

[68] White (2009, 244).

[69] White (2012a, 15).

[70] In the late nineteenth century, the Hindu reformer Dayananda Sarasvati spent nine years wandering the Himalayas in search of "true" yogis, and finding none (Sjoman 1996, 55).

[71] Jacobsen (2005, 23).

their spiritual path as yoga, such as the Ramanandi Tyagis. Whereas well-known yogic practices mentioned in medieval *haṭhayoga* texts are beyond the capacity of most present-day yogis (e.g., to curl the tongue backwards into the nasal cavity, *khecarī mudrā*), some seem to have specialized in demonstrating their acrobatic skills to journalists, tourists, and scholars alike. [72] Nonetheless, the image of the dangerous yogi has left its mark in today's folk beliefs.

These three avenues of research—the focus on yoga's respective meanings, on the history of postures, and on reported practitioners—make it absolutely clear that yoga never constituted a monolithic nor homogenous entity. On the contrary, plural meanings, (re)interpretations, cross-fertilization, and transformations were an essential part of this tradition. Seen from this perspective, "modern" yoga is simply another (re)definition or stage in a long history of interrelated concepts and practices.[73] Moreover, if one thinks of yoga as a practice that is primarily embodied—that is to say, transmitted by means of and through the body—written forms of cultural knowledge are by their very nature limited in their representative capacity.

The Impact of Language

Several researchers have expressed their reservations in regards to the label "modern" used to differentiate between earlier and more recent forms of yoga.[74] The term is indeed problematic. Does it refer to a particular time period, a paradigm shift, an ideology? Because modernity is not a universal but a cultural construct, some self-proclaimed "moderns" might fail to meet its varied and ambiguous expectations, while others might simply follow essentially competing visions of the concept.[75] Although one can describe yoga as embedded within specific modern settings (e.g., institutionalized instruction, a specific morality of health, or the emphasis on self-identity), even these distinctions undoubtedly privilege a Eurocentric perspective, appropriated and modified in various parts of the world. Therefore, we are left with the realization that no inherent property exists by which we can clearly define "modern" yoga as a separate entity. As a result, Singleton suggests replacing this qualifier with the term "transnational anglophone yoga," which rightly acknowledges the importance of English as a medium for the emergence and perpetuation of today's yoga discourses.[76] Unfortunately, this term

[72] On the performance of *khecarī mudrā* see Mallison (2005, 108); on sadhus who proudly perform their yogic prowess see Hausner (2007, 165–166).

[73] I hesitate to generalize today's yoga in terms of an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) or as "neo-traditionalism" (Pordié 2008) since both concepts presuppose a contrast to an assumed continuity and invariability of tradition. Moreover, some schools of present-day yoga explicitly advance hybrid forms.

[74] See, for instance, Singleton and Byrne (2008a, 6–7).

[75] See Bruno Latour's famous argument that *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) and Shmuel Eisenstadt's postulation for *Multiple Modernities* (2002).

[76] Singleton (2010, 9–10, 18).

downplays the extensive body of Indian language material that does not represent an isolated discourse.[77] Singleton himself discusses the significant role played by a yoga compendium that was assembled and written in the Kannada language by Krishnamacharya in 1934/1935.[78] Nonetheless, the time period generally associated with the phrase "modern yoga" does indeed begin with the documented and reciprocal transcultural communication of the nineteenth century that came into existence between India, Europe, and North America—one that was dominated by the linguistic medium of English. It is important to note that Indian yoga literature was at this time also in the midst of a significant genre shift; moving away from textual redaction and commentary to a nonfiction form that used original sources as documentation or was based upon personal insights ("yogic pulp nonfiction" in Alter's polemic words).[79] Still and all, both the empirical studies and secondary literature were without a doubt strongly influenced by the transnational anglophone discourse. Yoga is a case in point for what Srinivas Aravamudan termed, as in the title of his book, *Guru English* (2007), in reference to the self-perpetuating dynamics in the history of concepts once they have been translated into another language (in this case, English). This transformative dynamic is shaped not only by the varying categories of cognition provided and structured through language but also by the pragmatics of language use: Over time, the exclusively Indian meanings for terms like guru, mantra, tantra, yogi, and so on fade vis-à-vis their new meanings in English parlance. For example, in today's global context the term "yogini" signifies a dedicated female yoga practitioner, possibly a lean girl in sportswear; it no longer refers to a flying witch (i.e., a *yoginī*) feared for eating human flesh, as was and still is the common association found in Indian villages.

Similarly, when present-day Germans, Israelis, Argentinians, Japanese, or Russians talk about Raja Yoga or Hatha Yoga, their ideas and practices should not be viewed uncritically in analogy to or as a direct implementation of concepts mentioned in medieval or classical Sanskrit texts,—although references to such terms serve to identify particular strands of modern yoga. In an attempt to provide linguistic clarity, this volume will employ a distinct form of spelling: Whenever an author refers to the social practice of yoga and associated issues, he or she will use anglicized transcription. Accordingly, the various schools of yoga are written with capital letters (and non-italicized): Ashtanga Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Power Yoga, and so on. However, if an author refers to a concept mentioned in early Indian manuscripts the term is spelled lowercase, italicized, and according to the standard system of Sanskrit transliteration: for example, *kuṇḍālinī* (a distinct type of energy), *aṣṭāṅgayoga* (eight-limbed yoga), or *karmayoga* (in the *Bhagavadgītā*). The advantage of differentiating between "textual" *haṭhayoga*

[77] See Alter (2004, xix). At the beginning of the twentieth century, several Indian authors sought to explain Indian concepts of the body in modern medical terminology, see Wujastyk (2009).

[78] Singleton et al. (2012).

[79] Alter (2004, 21). According to Alter, this development was antedated by Orientalist studies on yoga, published from 1851 to 1930 (ibid. 6).

and "practiced" (Neo-)Hatha Yoga—and similar semantic correlates—is to avoid the implicit and rarely disputed claims of similarity; we thereby open analytic space to clearly elaborate on the relations between earlier and later forms of conceptualizing yoga.

And yet another linguistic observation would seem to highlight a phenomenon that runs counter to the trajectory of "guru English": the sheer number of postures that continue to appear in the twentieth century strongly suggests the invention of Sanskrit names (although speakers of present-day Indian languages can pronounce them according to their respective mother tongue).[80] For example, an exercise that stretches the spine while on all-fours, unknown in primary yoga texts, is today described as *biḍālāsana* (or *mārjārīāsana*), i.e., cat (stretch) pose.[81] This naming convention proves that hitherto unspecified body postures are framed within familiar epistemic categories, in India as elsewhere. In addition, similarly Sanskrit(ized) terms exist to characterize standing postures, a type of exercise almost completely absent from pre-twentieth-century manuscripts. Ironically, from a non-Indian perspective, the Sanskrit name seems to imply the referent's origin in "ancient yoga tradition." For lack of studies that probe this particular issue, this volume refers to all postures by their common English paraphrase, supplemented by the transliterated Sanskrit name.

Conceptualizing Cultural Flows: Yoga in Transit

As previously discussed, yoga is and was always multifaceted and prone to change. The malleability of the concept was caused by (and simultaneously produced) the wide semantic scope of the term "yoga". Whereas this semantic fuzziness remains relevant to yoga's present transnational dissemination, other ways of framing its metamorphoses appear to be obsolete. For example, it has been shown that yoga's trajectory cannot be reduced to a simplistic, one-way diffusion traveling from East to West. Its ever-changing face was neither the product of mere re-contextualization (i.e., the Westernization of a preexisting set of Indian body techniques), nor did it result from the combination of two or more pristine cultural practices (syncretism). In the last 100 years, yoga's itinerary did not follow just one

[80] Sanskrit is primarily a liturgical language that has many loanwords in present-day Indian vernaculars. Strictly speaking, the names of several postures can reference both Sanskrit and Hindi, among others. Both languages are written in Devanagari script, yet pronunciation differs. This distinction is reproduced in transliteration: *yoga* (Sanskrit)/*yog* (Hindi); *āsana* (Sanskrit)/*āsan* (Hindi); yet *guru* (Sanskrit)/*guru* (Hindi), etc. In the case of Hatha Yoga it is generally assumed that Indian names derive from Sanskrit, and therefore several books provide a Sanskrit glossary. This use of Sanskrit is in line with religious conventions, yet also reflects a modern Indian practice that is analogous to the Western use of technical terms from Latin.

[81] Based upon the *āsana* compilations by Sjoman (1996), Gharote et al. (2006), and Bühnemann (2007), there is no evidence of this posture in earlier yoga sources.

path, direction, or logic and its widespread dissemination did not lead to just one shared understanding of what yoga is and does. It is fair to say that the globalization of yoga did not produce homogeneity, all the more so if one takes into account the primarily local forms found in Hindu India (e.g., yoga camps). So how does one classify and systematize these interlinked developments, semiotic chains, references, and structural (dis)similarities in ways that push the methodological and interpretative envelope? Can we generalize certain traits, patterns, and procedures that characterize this traveling subject? In this section, I shall briefly discuss some recent findings and models that relate to global spaces, transnational flows, and cultural interactions, and consider how they might inspire and facilitate the analysis of present-day yoga and its dynamics. This overview is intended to be programmatic rather than comprehensive in its review of concepts and approaches that, so far, do not represent a fully assembled body of theorizing but rather reflect ongoing academic debates at various disciplinary sites. Instead, it is a provisional outline for the notion of transculturality in relation to the study of yoga's global circulation; one that endeavors to invite a wide array of scholarly reorientations. The authors in this volume have each taken steps to advance the possibilities of this approach. Whereas some of them welcomed the transcultural as a descriptive category to reveal the character of specific discourses and developments, others employed it as a heuristic device to position and verify their research data, or to raise altogether new research questions. Against their respective disciplinary background, they have integrated aspects of the transculturality debate into their research, mindful of the methodological opportunities it provides to elucidate and explain the entangled movements of ideas, peoples, and practices in particular as they relate to yoga in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

One of the most influential ways of thinking about translocal processes goes back to the social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. He suggested looking at cultural flows within an analytic framework of imaginary landscapes; that is to say, within various spaces that are co-produced and negotiated between socially and spatially dispersed groups of individuals and globally defined fields of possibility.[82] According to Appadurai, five basic modes exist by which we project and experience global/cultural configurations: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. With respect to the spread and perception of yoga one might annotate these modes as follows: (1) yoga practitioners as imagined transnational communities; (2) implicit and explicit ideas regarding the components of a yoga class or exercise, notably "techniques of the body" (Marcel Mauss); (3) notions about international monetary transfers associated with the site-specific commercialization of yoga; (4) representations of yoga produced in diverse media contexts; and (5) ideologies that express the yogic attitude toward societal issues or its universal usefulness. These various "scapes" provide analytic distinctions that help recognize the conditions under which global flows occur and interrelate,

[82] Appadurai's notion of imaginary landscapes (1996, 31) follows Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (1983), which was developed in the late 1960s.

thereby mapping out heterogeneous, disjunctive, and asymmetric processes rather than forms of homogeneity within the worlds of yoga. Appadurai used the suffix "scape" to emphasize that these circulatory dimensions are not objective entities but highly perspectival constructs whose shapes are fluid and irregular.[83]

Unlike Appadurai, several other scholars concentrated on "deterritorialization" as a conceptual tool for critically reconsidering the influence of place and regional structures. They focused on the perspectives of transnational communities and on their interactions, possibly spanning two or more nations.[84] These multinational social spaces—and transit zones in particular—constituted their specific field of empirical research, methodologically accessible by means of multi-sited ethnography. This research avenue has been fruitfully advanced by Strauss' and also by Hoyez's work on global yoga networks (mentioned in the previous section).[85] In the present book a good example of this approach is the joint contribution by Sarah Strauss and Laura Mandelbaum, who analyze a financially robust and ecologically thinking transnational class of yoga practitioners and their interlinked commitments to personal and environmental health (see chapter "Consuming Yoga, Conserving the Environment: Transcultural Discourses on Sustainable Living"). Deterritorialized spaces can also include areas that are devoid of any specifically local character and even look remarkably similar no matter where they exist (e.g., shopping malls). Even yoga retreats can be categorized as "non-places" (Marc Augé). Anne Koch's depiction of the yoga instruction offered at an international holiday resort in Thailand, for example, illustrates how this beachside practice could occur anywhere comparable scenery and climate are found (see chapter "Yoga as a Production Site of Social and Human Capital: Transcultural Flows from a Cultural Economic Perspective"). Following Mimi Nichter, secluded environments like this invite a distinct category of yoga practitioners (see chapter "The Social Life of Yoga: Exploring Transcultural Flows in India"). In several other studies on globalization, deterritorialization evolved as a key term used to describe the declining impact of geographically bounded concepts, practices, and identities in relation to particular social phenomena.[86]

The scholarly attention that was given to increased transnational communication, mobility, and networks also resulted in a re-evaluation of the notion of culture as a seemingly static and spatially defined unit; clearly, cultures could no longer be conceptualized as island-like entities (e.g., national cultures) influencing each other at singular points in time. Whereas the inherent sameness and stability of cultural

[83] Appadurai (1996, 33).

[84] Kearny (1995, 553).

[85] Strauss (2005), Hoyez (2005, 2007).

[86] Initially, the term "deterritorialization" was introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) to address a resolution of chains of associations, and in particular the issue of displaced (rather than deconstructed) significations. For example, a clearly recognizable form ("assemblage") that occupies a certain discursive terrain can be decentered (i.e., deterritorialized) and relinked with another set of relations (i.e., "reterritorialized"). Thus Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of territory is highly abstract rather than geographical.

groups had been questioned by social anthropologists for a long time, it was the rise in global interconnectedness that initiated a substantial shift of scholarly focus to the performative dimension of culture.[87] Seen through this performative lens, groups of individuals negotiate and mutually reconfirm their shared cultural knowledge, tacit theories, and routines through social practice. Through performance, interaction, and embodiment, these epistemic communities shape and are shaped by their respective values and norms, hierarchies and symbolic orders, aspirations and dislikes, imaginaries, politics, representations and artifacts.[88] In short, these social entities are heterogeneous and subject to change and while they may group together in a specific area, they may not be the sole inhabitants of that locality. Consequently, the heuristic value of studying "Indian" versus "Western" approaches to yoga, or comparing "Indian," "German," and perhaps "American" posture practices seems limited, especially if one assumes that cultural sites spill across national borders. As such, it becomes important to ask who qualifies to represent these contrasts? Is it the Indian elite doing yoga in a Mumbai-based gym? Or German yoga teachers who adopt a Hindu spiritual name? Perhaps it's the Asian-Indian Americans teaching yoga in Germany? In a globally interconnected world, previously unquestioned (national) categories have developed a certain artificiality. Still, major social differences do indeed exist among yoga practitioners. Therefore, it would be illuminating to consider particular yoga cultures (i.e., epistemic communities or social entities), last but not least vis-à-vis other social movements (such as the Green Movement, see Strauss and Mandelbaum, chapter "Consuming Yoga, Conserving the Environment: Transcultural Discourses on Sustainable Living") or in juxtaposition to other cultural environments (such as the post-Fordist workplace, see Schnäbele, chapter "The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace"). Alternately, it might prove useful to compare the social impact of disparate yoga cultures, viewed through the discourses and practices shared by aficionados of particular yoga traditions. In this volume, Beatrix Hauser illustrates how contrasting communicative conventions and underlying assumptions shape and are shaped by distinct types of yoga classes (see chapter "Touching the Limits, Assessing Pain: On Language Performativity, Health, and Well-Being in Yoga Classes").

This shift in the conceptualization of culture(s) creates some terminological ambiguity. Although flows, spaces, and processes can be both transcultural (connecting epistemic communities) and transnational (connecting citizens), it is important to keep in mind that this need not necessarily be the case. For instance,

[87] On anthropological debates related to the concept of culture see Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Hannerz (1992) and Hastrup and Olwig (1997); for a summary account see Kearny (1995, 556–557). A sociological perspective on culture theory has been offered by Reckwitz (2005); for a philosophical statement in favor of transculturality see Welsch (1999).

[88] There are diverse opinions as to the analytic role and impact of embodiment (implicit, corporeal knowledge) and as to the role of practice as a mode or negotiating cultural difference (see Csordas 1990; Rao 2005). If "knowledge" is understood to include embodied routines and tacit assumptions (as I do), epistemic communities result from shared social practice and vice versa.

Mark Singleton's contribution shows how the genesis of modern postural yoga in colonial India resulted from the mutual influence of increasingly local physical culturists on the one hand and the Neo-Hindu Renaissance on the other—and hence indicates how transcultural flows on the global and domestic level intermingle and alternate in time (see chapter "Transnational Exchange and the Genesis of Modern Postural Yoga"). Similarly, Suzanne Newcombe draws our attention to the ways in which early British yoga practitioners were influenced by a subcultural movement interested in the occult and witchcraft, and only by the 1960s had developed into a social entity of its own. By that time, yoga had emerged as an acceptable leisure activity; although it continues to nurture hopes of magical powers in respect to issues such as anti-aging, self-empowerment, and healing (see chapter "Magic and Yoga: The Role of Subcultures in Transcultural Exchange"). With regard to yoga's globalization, it makes little sense to draw hard and fast lines between its more local and long-distance influences and currents. Differences in the cultural interaction that occurs on the international and the national levels (between subcultures) are gradual rather than fundamental, especially noticeable if one considers the size and heterogeneity of a national context such as India. With reference to only one Indian city, Nichter can show the frictions that exist between various types of foreign participants and Indian yoga students, each consulting with different teachers and institutes. Whereas international travelers often submitted to the strict regime of an "authentic" yoga master (and were critical of yoga's commercialization), women in the Indian middle class considered Hatha Yoga a "hobby" and an effective method for weight loss (see chapter "The Social Life of Yoga: Exploring Transcultural Flows in India").

Academic interest in transcultural phenomena is guided by the fundamental assumption that a specific ontological relationship exists between subjects (social actors, groups of individuals) and objects of transmission. At best, academic inquiry includes the side effects of traveling practices, ideas, and images, and therefore emphasizes unintended results, the emergence of new meanings and the modification of people involved. Seen thusly, the character of these flows is truly "trans"-cultural—i.e., potentially transformative—rather than cross-cultural (which implies that meanings remain more or less stable as they move across cultures). In this context, the analysis of transcultural processes privileges the recipient's point of view, i.e., the (temporary) outcome as well as the routes and channels of transmission as far as it can be reconstructed. In this respect, it stresses a distinct perspective of knowledge production; the place of origin (or authorship of some kind) is analytically of less consequence but rather a relative point of reference. Along similar lines, the term "appropriation" was suggested to signify the hermeneutic procedure of any cultural exchange in which elements are associated with new meaning and by this process transform those who appropriate them.[89] However, the term commonly refers to the cultural mimesis of hegemonic representations invested with new and at times subversive meanings.[90] Not surprisingly, interstices,

[89] Schneider (2003, 224).

[90] Taussig (1993), see also Hahn (2011).

ruptures, and discontinuities are considered part and parcel of these transcultural trajectories, rather than seen as exceptions. Suzanne Augenstein's case study about children's yoga in Germany is a good example. She reveals how school authorities were viewed as gatekeepers who complicated yoga's entry into primary-level classrooms for fear it was a cult. Following her case study, yoga exercises were reframed and introduced in schools as part of a campaign against racism. Only a decade later these same authorities placed excessive demands on yoga's capacity for improving both social behavior and health (see chapter "The Introduction of Yoga in German schools: A Case Study"). Although there is no uniform terminology that is consistently used in these ongoing debates on transcultural phenomena, one could say that the concept of flow (rather than appropriation) invites a more spatially disconnected and long-term processual perspective. It holds the promise of mapping traveling ideas and concepts (like yoga) that constitute a dynamically structured interconnectedness on both the macro- and micro-social levels, scaling long-distance interactions and exploring how agency manifests at a specific site. [91] Seen from this angle, locality is relational and contextual rather than spatial. As a site of social negotiations, the local is an integral part of the global, serving as an interface. However, the academic notion of context and its impact needs further elaboration.[92]

With regard to the study of contemporary yoga the transcultural lens has many advantages: It provides useful terms and descriptive categories that help one grasp more fully the mutual influence of the varying schools of yoga, the competing ways in which yoga has been circulated, and the twists and turns in yoga's overall orientation. In these ways, the terminology not only refines the perspective of the observer but also supplies hints that point toward previously unnoticed research data or assists in a self-critical reassessment of the apparently obvious. The concept of transcultural flows also provides a frame of reference that can locate and connect individual research results to larger perspectives, statements, representations, and developments. However, these benefits should not limit researchers to what Stuart Rockefeller criticizes as a "managerial perspective," i.e., a top-down approach that is likely to focus on large-scale changes at the cost of making it difficult to understand how these processes are initiated on the level of social practice.[93] Instead, the appeal of a transcultural analysis is to discover the interface of translocal notions of yoga, yoga practice, and yogic attitude vis-à-vis situated sites of experience; that is to say, to aid in a close-up look at how agency manifests, how (new) practices and meanings emerge, and how they are negotiated and/or ignored. The discursive production of a "useful body" is a case in point. According

[91] For a genealogy of the term "flow" see Rockefeller (2011, 566).

[92] Appadurai (2010); on the epistemological difficulties associated with the term "context" see also Dilger and Hadolt (2010, 19–22).

[93] I agree with Stuart Rockefeller (2011) in his critique that academic studies on cultural flows often concentrate solely on a "managerial perspective" and thus raise several problems as to the authority of a scholar.

to Verena Schnäbele, yoga practitioners in Germany furnish their sentient bodies with an agency that helps them resist unhealthy working conditions. Thus the body becomes "useful," if not outright subversive in its efforts to combat the pressures of the post-Fordist labor market (see chapter "The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace"). In this respect the concept of transcultural flow serves as a heuristic device that can ask new and/or more precise research questions, such as: Which conditions made it possible for particular forms, elements, and representations of yoga to travel to new settings, and which did not? What factors actually favored the flow of a particular idea or practice? What happened in the course of the journey that allowed these ideas or practices to integrate well into existing social fields? What (if anything) did they replace, and what was gained by their adoption? Who were the agents or cultural brokers? When and how did yoga come to stand for particular issues as defined and structured by its new environment (e.g., beauty)? Which new meanings emerged in the process of translating and reframing yoga in a new context, and was the emergence spontaneous or deliberate?

To approach yoga as a concept and practice in transit has methodological consequences that privilege three distinct entry points for research: first, the supervisory perspective on pathways; second, the close-up view on meaning production; and third, the genealogy of selected ideas, themes, and concepts. Let us discuss each of these briefly. (1) By taking a panoramic perspective as one's analytic point of departure, one invariably creates opportunities for considering cultural interconnectedness and multidirectional long-distance flows (or rather "jumps"). Just how one goes about taking advantage of these options can best be described by George Marcus' guidelines for multi-sited ethnography: follow the people, follow the thing, follow the metaphor, follow the plot, story or allegory, follow the life or biography, and follow the conflict.[94] For instance, Koch pursues the creation of value and incentives that attract people to yoga in both local and international markets, considering yoga's appeal in terms of social and body capital and revealing how non-materialistic consumption patterns still follow market rules (see chapter "Yoga as a Production Site of Social and Human Capital: Transcultural Flows from a Cultural Economic Perspective"). (2) The next access point—the close-up approach—privileges processes of meaning production on the micro-social level and explores competing strategies, contrasting views, frictions, and inconsistent developments. It focuses on communication in progress rather than on undisputed or even overall positions. This approach illustrates how yoga is made and remade in social practice; in other words, the phenomena that occur at the interface where the global is localized and selective views acquire larger audiences. Questions that arise include: What pragmatics, agents, methods, and logics are involved in the acts of translating, adopting, and selling yoga? On what basis do yoga practitioners link-in with an imagined translocal yoga community? Hauser's analysis of yoga tutorials, for instance, shows in what ways and by what means yoga has been

[94] Marcus (1995, 106–110).

constructed as either simple, gentle, and feminized or, in contrast, as a demanding, athletic, and strenuous practice (see chapter "Touching the Limits, Assessing Pain: On Language Performativity, Health, and Well-Being in Yoga Classes"). (3) The two previous analytical paths are not mutually exclusive but differ basically in their initial direction of focus. Additionally, there is the genealogical approach which highlights particular themes and explores their representations and discourses across time and social contexts. Liane Hofmann's study is a fine case in point. She explores by whom, when, and how the notion of *kuṇḍālinī* energy has been taken up in psychology—modulated through the lens of Carl Gustav Jung and others—and by the transpersonal psychologists of the 1960s, and finally within clinical settings (see chapter "The Impact of Kundalini Yoga on Concepts and Diagnostic Practice in Psychology and Psychotherapy").

Let me reiterate here that the shift in analytic perspective proposed in these essays neither questions yoga as an applied philosophy or therapeutic system nor denies the experiential reality of yoga practitioners. Rather, it invites the researcher and reader alike to recognize, view, and explore yoga's macro and micro-social circulation, diversity, and fluidity as a significant living social practice beyond judgmental statements on authenticity or degeneration.

Before I briefly introduce each of the following chapters, let me share some general insights in regards to yoga as an example of a practice in-transit, a traveling concept, and a subject of scientific inquiry. These insights were generated in the course of assembling the present collection and guided by reflections on methodological and conceptual issues such as: Which descriptive and analytic tools have proven most useful? What does yoga's trajectory tell us about the process of transcultural exchange in general? What findings raise further questions or stimulate forthcoming research? Let me offer these signposts and tentative conclusions as a way of providing a better vantage point from which to view the concept of transculturality as it relates to the array of topics that we call "yoga":

- It is methodologically helpful to avoid any a priori definition of yoga and instead to assume "yoga(s)" in the plural, understanding the term as a related bundle of ideas, discourses, and practices.[95] By accepting this plurality one invites acceptance of the multiple and potentially inconsistent meanings that (may) exist. Following a similar logic, the researcher should not anticipate connections between local bodily practice and the global yoga movement until and unless they result from the analysis of respective interactions, statements, and representations; acknowledging that the notion of a like-minded (unified) worldwide yoga community is first and foremost a cultural construction.
- From a diachronic perspective, yoga does not disseminate as a complete system. Instead, we observe that it is some component parts which travel (e.g., postures, forms of controlled breathing, particular attitudes, ideologies, and so on). We cannot generalize how these selected elements will be related and (re-)

[95] See Singleton and Byrne (2008a, 5), c.f. White (2012a).

contextualized in the recipient society (whether within or beyond the national borders). At any rate, the process of cultural translation is inherently partial. Not surprisingly, people sense a form of meaning and a benefit that resonates within their familiar cultural structures, and on this basis recognize only some aspects and miss others. At times, these cultural appropriations appeal only to a minority.

- Regardless of the mobility of yoga teachers and students, there seems to be a hierarchy of epistemic categories that facilitates or resists transcultural dissemination. On the one hand we have explicit knowledge (e.g., yoga philosophy), which can be verbalized and thus learned cognitively. In this case, the translation process might cause interferences (e.g., "Guru English") and competing interpretations. On the other hand, there are bodily experiences which result from performance rather than verbal communication and whose meaning(s) emerge not only in the course of posture performance but possibly vary according to collective and personal memory. In other words, even if body movements are physically similar, the bodily experience has a fundamentally cultural quality. For instance, the chanting of mantras among yoga practitioners who are neither familiar with Sanskrit nor its liturgical role has a primarily somatic effect: the sensations of voice, sound, and unison dominate. Similarly, while postures performed with folded hands might easily evoke religious connotations for some, an arm balance like the peacock pose (*mayūrāsana*) might remind others of acrobatics rather than conjure images of the superhuman powers with which it was associated in its fourteenth century magico-religious context.[96] Moreover, with regard to transcultural flows, the human body itself seems to have an analytically-neglected potential for releasing creative (mis) understanding and thus inviting discursive change (e.g., the "useful body"). The process of embodiment (the corporeality of experience) allows reorientations in the construction of meaning.[97]
- Yoga practice is not only the object of cultural flow but also serves as a carrier or channel for introducing and verifying cultural knowledge. By means of yoga, notions of a healthy body, the mind-body-complex, body aesthetics, self-identity, spirituality, and so on are communicated, shaped, and at times challenged. In this way, yoga can convey hitherto unknown themes (e.g., the recitation of mantras in Germany) as well as issues familiar to the recipient society (e.g., aspirations for a higher self). In either case, postural yoga can become an agent; a social player that serves to inspire and possibly reorient general ways of thinking about a variety of issues—last but not least among these, human health and well-being.
- Finally, I would like to return to the question that seeks to clarify the basis upon which present-day varieties of "yogic" discourse and practice can, in fact, be identified as yoga? Should we keep on searching for core epistemological principles that enable us to distinguish Hatha Yoga from gymnastics and faith-

[96] *Mayūrāsana* was already mentioned in the *Haṭhayogapradīpika*. To perform this *āsana* the yoga practitioner must balance the body like a horizontal stick while holding its weight on both elbows and forearms.

[97] Marcus (1995, 106–110).

based practice, or rather explore avenues and sites of equating and dissociation? As mentioned in earlier sections of this introduction, the basic ideas that shaped today's globalized notion of yoga are no more than 150 years old.[98] Around 1900, yoga gradually emerged as a hybrid exercise system for the everyday use of laypersons in search of personal growth and a physical ideal of one sort or another. The practice itself varied throughout the twentieth century, as well as the moral value attached to yoga. Against this background, solely cultural context determines if and how Hatha Yoga differs from other kinds of physical movement, mental activity, and fields of practice. Therefore we can only historicize on what basis people possibly conceive of a particular behavior or activity as yoga. At the present, one powerful concept to facilitate identification is provided by the discourse on alternative and complementary health: the trope of "mind-body practices." Seen thusly, yoga is "easy to think" as a discipline based on the assumed and appreciated interaction between mind and body, and where their amalgamation is regarded as the source of "energy" or "life force."[99] The significance of this internal interaction probably emerged vis-à-vis modern, Cartesian thinking on the mind-body divide (rather than previous assumptions on the tantric body), further substantiated by the recognition of particular body techniques as a method to achieve this supposed union: i.e., an organized synchronization of conscious breathing and deliberately controlled movement that alternates with willful release. However, even the concept of mind-body practices cannot fully explain why some innovations are easily subsumed under the category of yoga (e.g., soft music) and others challenge its very status (e.g., aggressive commercialization). It is likely that (dis)similarities are perceived as a result of comparisons drawn against a backdrop of contemporary, relative and locally dominant yoga *imaginaires*—what I would call the "yoganess" of an element, stance, or practice. Seen from this perspective, yoganess can be achieved with the help of iconic body postures or gestures (such as sitting cross-legged and with folded hands), by means of a specific intention to perform a posture (an assumed "yogic" attitude), or simply by the multilayered name "yoga". In practice, these three lines of identification often blur.

The aim of this book is to look at these interactive moments and processes and at the epistemic twists and turns that exist when elements (apparently) related to yoga are intentionally or unintentionally reframed. In order to do this, we focus on the underlying motivations, sites, and agents involved in the circulation of posture-based yoga.

[98] See Hauser, chapter "Touching the Limits, Assessing Pain: On Language Performativity, Health, and Well-Being in Yoga Classes".

[99] According to the Indologist Frits Staal (1993, 69) the popular notion that in Asian thought "mind and body are one" is a contemporary Western trope rather than a reflection of Indian theories.

Synopsis of Chapters

The first three chapters of this volume concentrate on epistemological developments that originated at the beginning of the twentieth century: the reevaluation of yoga as a system of physical exercise that improves mind and body; the Western appropriation of yoga techniques as magical devices used to gain power and effect change; and the discovery of yoga knowledge as equivalent to scientific findings on the transformation of consciousness in the field of Western psychology.

Mark Singleton opens our discussions with his exploration of the genesis of modern postural yoga in 1920s and 30s India. He shows that the foundations for what we today call Hatha Yoga were laid within a relatively short period of time; furthermore, how its present-day ethos derived from the New Thought movement. Whereas *āsana*-practice was initially excluded from the neo-Hindu yoga revival, by the turn of the twentieth century various strands of European gymnastics and bodybuilding (introduced by the YMCA) had entered Indian society. These "imports" changed the ontological status of bodily exercise and were crucial for both the emergence of a militant anti-colonial "yoga training" and the scientific endeavors aimed at verifying yoga's physiological benefits, the latter supported by key figures such as Swami Kuvalayananda and Shri Yogendra. Singleton shows why and how physical culture and *āsana*-training cross-fertilized in 1930s and 40s Mysore State to produce what later became one of the most famous yoga schools in India—a hybridity most visible in the emphasis on dynamic elements synchronized by rhythmic breathing. Yet more important than locating the Indian or European origins of a particular posture, according to Singleton, is discovering how cultural, religious, and spiritual meanings attach to physical practice and in what respect these new values inevitably change the way people approach posture performance. From this perspective, the identification of a body posture as a particular yoga exercise (*āsana*), and the distinction between both, results purely from associated meanings.

In the chapter that follows, Suzanne Newcombe focuses on the circulation of yoga knowledge in Britain during a period that runs parallel to the emergence of modern postural yoga in India. She explores the association of yoga with occultism and in particular the overlapping networks of those interested in the metaphysics of yoga and the admirers of spirituality, magic, and witchcraft. Her analysis shows the significant role played by esoteric publishers and bookshops as disseminators of subcultural discourses before and after World War II and suggests that in pre-1960s Britain these milieus did indeed overlap; and that even today the practice of postural yoga continues to exhibit magical elements. Newcombe posits that this is most visible when yoga is praised as a youth and beauty elixir, as a method of self-empowerment, or as a healing device believed to surpass even the efficacy of biomedical treatments. In conclusion, she not only stresses the importance of recognizing cultural flows within a particular national context but also hints at the impact of academic knowledge production. Lastly, she ponders the question as to whether today's yoga practitioners once cognizant of these disconcerting magical

elements might change their attitude toward or become immune to yoga's mysterious effects.

Central to *haṭhayoga*-theory, the third chapter focuses on the concept of *kuṇḍālinī* and the various ways that it influenced knowledge production in the field of Western psychology. Liane Hofmann traces the history of the Kundalini syndrome: categorized as the single most prevalent type of "spiritual emergency" in psychodiagnosis and psychotherapy. It not only influenced the post-1960s development of transpersonal psychology but also the pathologization of certain types of somatosensory phenomena. While transpersonal psychology emphasized Asian forms of self-cultivation and "spiritual" growth as legitimate subjects of academic research and thus regarded these crisis stages as part of a developmental process, an increasing number of clinically relevant "energy phenomena" resulted by 1994 in the addition of two significant categories to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM): "religious or spiritual problem" as well as "culture bound syndrome." Using the East–West transfer of knowledge on Kundalini Yoga as a case in point, Hofmann critically reflects on the specific challenges and difficulties that psychologists and therapists face when dealing with these new categories. Keeping in mind how ideas and practices circulate within a global context, both diagnostic categories should be viewed through a critical lens. Approached from various analytical perspectives, psychotherapists might consider personality as potentially hybrid rather than emphasize its culture-specific creation, reconsidering their interpretive schemata.

The second part of the book focuses on processes that link global discourses to particular local settings and concentrates on meaning production at the micro-social level. Taking Germany as their focal site, the authors argue for a situatedness of yoga meanings, (re)created in one way or another against the backdrop of both global forces and local fantasies of India and its traditions. It goes almost without saying that the assessment of these factors can produce varying and even contradictory results.

Beatrix Hauser concentrates on the question of how habitual language use in yoga tutorials shapes the experience of yoga practitioners, their perspective of the body and its potential for self-development. By contrasting the standardized teaching instructions of a gentle yoga that is "for everyone" with settings that emphasize a vigorous physical workout, she not only illustrates how yoga tuition reflects a particular zeitgeist but also how the approach taken toward postural yoga may vary in its efforts to maintain a healthy body. On the basis of performance theory, Hauser regards verbal instruction as the crucial medium used to (re)direct the assessment of bodily limits and pain. She notes that in yoga classes of the 1970s, exhaustion and pain were regarded as warning signs associated with having reached one's limits; however, more recent forms teach the appreciation of pains from stretching as an indicator of the transformative process that brings body and self to perfection. In a post-secular and liberalized setting, to transcend personal psychophysical limits and transform into a hyper-flexible body-person is framed within the health discourse. Hauser's conclusions open to the possibility that the performance of similar yoga postures can potentially lead to differing results, which are shaped as much by verbal instruction as by their social contexts.

Verena Schnäbele analyzes contemporary postural yoga as a strategy for coping with the post-Fordist deregulation of knowledge-based work in Germany. A significant number of yoga practitioners, often highly educated professionals, are faced with changes in the workplace: a tight schedule, heavy workload, self-management, and customer service orientations, to name but a few. Moreover, the boundaries between work-related skills and obligations on the one hand and personal recreation and self-fulfillment on the other have become blurred. As such, Schnäbele hypothesizes that yoga provides people not only with the necessary means for stress relief and self-actualization but also with micro-political subversive strategies. In her analysis she departs from mainstream sociological methodology in that she emphasizes the human body as both an object of self-reflection and an agent unto itself. She argues that the sentient yoga body is "useful" in providing the self with an alternative perception that can resist the exaggerated standards of the workplace, while the body's appearance can be shaped by the hegemonic discourses on beauty.

Suzanne Augenstein explores the implementation of children's yoga in selected German schools and the funding for these programs by the German health care system. Her inquiry vividly shows how a particular yoga style developed in accordance with specific target groups, in relation to the institutions and patrons immediately involved in the process, and in consideration of the accompanying socio-economic conditions. As a cultural broker who must translate the benefits of Hatha Yoga into the dominant language of school authorities, Augenstein provides an insider's perspective. Initially, yoga for kindergarten and elementary school children was disguised and labeled as a "body-focused program" (*Körperorientiertes Programm*) in order to avoid any possible association with yoga as a cult and also to aid in the development of quality control standards: the intention was to improve children's body posture, concentration, and social behavior. However, in 2003, when the German government began to subsidize preventive health care initiatives, the reference to yoga was no longer considered a hindrance but rather a positive indicator for politically desired health-conscious behavior. Since then, high hopes exist that children's yoga has the capacity to solve complex social problems, likely an excessive expectation.

The third part of the book focuses on practices of advertising and consuming yoga across national, social, and discursive boundaries. It concentrates on transnational and deterritorialized yoga markets, as well as on various classes of mobile yoga practitioners who meet in India. Moreover, it highlights the processes that yoga consumers engage in as they create supplemental values, whether in regard to yoga's recent association with ecological normativity, the construction of an idealized Indianness, or the production of human and social capital.

Sarah Strauss and Laura Mandelbaum focus on the discursive links between yoga practice and the Green Movement, and how each is mobilized on behalf of the other. This process is closely connected to the dissemination of a transnational, well-educated, and cosmopolitan middle class that defines itself by its thoughts on health, well-being, and ecology. Initially coined as a distinct category of consumer,—Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability, LOHAS—shared attitudes toward the market economy turned into an agenda for the self-identified LOHAS

movement. Based on web analysis and narrative interviews conducted on three continents, the authors describe how yoga practitioners relate their personal yoga practice to wider issues of anti-consumerist morality and planetary health. In this way, yoga practice not only serves as "a technology of the self" (Foucault) but the body becomes the site of a general transformational process that seeks a more "holistic" approach to the world at large and embraces well-being of many kinds. However, the transnational community of yoga practitioners—as well as the LOHAS movement in general—is by no means a homogenous group. They seem to be connected by shared goals and (yoga) practice rather than by socioeconomic categories such as religion, political affiliation, ethnic identity, and so on.

Similarly, Mimi Nichter explores the topics that surround various groupings of yoga practitioners, yet her contribution shifts our focus to Mysore, India. She analyzes four types of international yoga tourists traveling to India to study: they range from "yoga lites" to "yoga professionals," each group trying to complete their own vision of Indian culture. At the same time yoga practitioners as social actors situated in Mysore join in and create what Nichter terms the "social life of yoga". This particular social life is structured by attending yoga classes as well as by participating in a variety of other services offered by Indian entrepreneurs in the name of Indian philosophy and health tourism. Significantly, the main yoga institute in Mysore attracts few Indian practitioners, apparently because Indian and non-Indian yoga students pursue different goals. Whereas international yoga travelers in search of self-development generally submit to a strict training regime, the Indian middle class has developed a perspective that tends to view yoga as a "hobby." In Nichter's study, the paradigmatic Indian yoga practitioner was female, married, and practiced yoga as a means of losing weight. As a result, yoga teachers had to ease the Indian students into the exercises, accommodating to the practitioner's physical and health conditions.

In the last chapter, Anne Koch approaches yoga as a transnational site of production: of social capital (social networks), human capital (experiences, subjectivities, and knowledge), and in particular body capital (body awareness). She shows how the commodification of immaterial values (including attitudes and routines) correlates with distinct marketing strategies on the local and global level, comparing the accumulation strategies of practitioners in yoga studios in Munich, Germany with those at an international yoga resort in Thailand. Applying a distinct religio- and cultural-economic perspective, Koch examines the "push-and-pull factors" affecting the flow of yoga, looking at the issue of "transaction costs," while considering "path dependency," efforts to increase the durability of experience, and the creation of demand. However, apart from shared "post-materialistic values" the case study reveals that yoga practitioners at the holiday resort were clearly more affluent than their counterparts in Munich. The great advantage of Koch's theoretical approach is that it pays attention to the economic modalities of cultural flows, to rational decisions taken regarding the positioning of yoga (e.g., vis-à-vis other partial markets), as well as to the contingent local parameters that are involved.

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Part I
Reframing Yoga in the History of the Twentieth Century

Transnational Exchange and the Genesis of Modern Postural Yoga

Mark Singleton

Abstract This chapter will explore the emergence of posture practice (*āsana*) as the primary facet of yoga in the modern, globalized world. Prior to the modern period, *āsana* was rarely treated as the principal aspect of a yoga *sādhana*. In the medieval systems of *haṭhayoga*, from which it is sometimes claimed that today's popular forms derive, posture was subordinate to other practices, such as breathing (*prāṇāyāma*), purification (*kriyā*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), and sound work (*nāda*). During the 1920s and 1930s, postural yoga began to be assimilated into the modern yoga project begun by Vivekananda. Perhaps most importantly, Shri Yogendra and Swami Kuvalayananda developed postural systems greatly informed by Western science and medicine, and by the international physical culture movement. Over time, *āsana* became modern, scientific, and legitimate in the eyes of the world, thanks to their efforts and to those of others, such as Tirumalai Krishnamacharya. *Āsana* also interacted and partially merged with Western traditions of therapeutic gymnastics, "spiritual" movement and dance, while shedding many of the esoteric aspects and bizarre practices of the original *haṭhayoga*.

Introduction

Yoga in the modern, globalized world has become virtually synonymous with the practice of posture (*āsana*). For millions of people today in Europe, America, and Australasia, the primary association of the word yoga is with stretching regimes aimed at the improvement of health, and often tied to "spiritual" development. However, this is a situation which is quite unique in the long history of yoga. Until recently, *āsana* was not commonly the mainstay of a traditional yoga *sādhana* (course of practice), including the body-oriented *haṭhayoga*. This is not to say that *āsana* was somehow "invented" in the modern period, but that its function and

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status is often vastly different now than it ever was in pre-modern Indian traditions. This sea-change in the predominant connotations of the word "yoga" came about during a relatively short period in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was the result of a complex transnational exchange of ideas and practices within the larger context of what we might term "the yoga renaissance."[1]

The principle factor informing yoga's transmutation into a system of stretching for health and fitness is the broad and multifaceted tradition of modern gymnastics, which swept the world from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In India, a variety of European gymnastics traditions cross-pollinated with the modern discourses of yoga. At the same time, Europeans and Americans were appropriating and blending these new export forms of yoga according to their own understandings of the body and its place within "spiritual" practice. Yoga, as it is popularly conceived today, is the outcome of this dialogical exchange between para-religious, modern body culture techniques developed in the West, indigenous Indian *āsana* practice, and various English-language discourses of yoga that began to emerge in India from at least the time of Vivekananda (1863–1902) onwards. This chapter considers some of the most important stages in the development of modern posture-based yoga practices.

I will be using the term "transnational anglophone yoga" to indicate certain systems of yoga that began to appear in India, Europe, and the United States from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. There are many varieties, but they are all characterized by the fact that they cross cultural and national bounds, and are transmitted through the medium of English. I prefer this phrase over the more commonly used "Modern Yoga," insofar as it simply describes the phenomenon and avoids the suggestion that we are talking about a unified and categorical body of discourses and practices.[2] It also obviates the question as to whether practices are inherently "modern" (beyond mere contemporaneity), and may help to move the inquiry beyond a simple cataloguing of the modern versus the "traditional" aspects of practice. This can have the important methodological advantage of preventing history from sliding into typography. Finally, it serves to make a distinction between English language, export forms of yoga, and "grass roots" Indian traditions (whose medium is Sanskrit or an Indian vernacular, and which are not for the most part involved in the global flows that are the defining feature of transnational anglophone yoga) without offering any *a priori* judgments as to the superiority, or greater authenticity, of the one over the other.

I begin with a short background on transnational anglophone yoga. *Āsana* was often absent from early modern formulations of yoga such as those of Vivekananda, and it was not really until the 1930s that posture began to be widely accepted as a primary feature of yoga practice. One reason for this was that *āsana* practices were associated with low-caste mendicants, who were anathema to caste Hindus, the new English-educated Indian middle class, and the colonial authorities. Furthermore, extreme postural austerities had long been a focus of the European ethnographic gaze, and were subject to ridicule and scorn. Little was known about the deeper

[1] This chapter is based on my book *Yoga Body: The Origin of Modern Posture Practice* (2010).

[2] The term "Modern Yoga" was first theorized by Elizabeth De Michelis (2004).

meaning of *yogāsana*, but they were nonetheless often the target of censure. For this reason, pioneers of transnational yoga like Vivekananda excluded instruction on *āsana* from their teachings, so as to make it palatable to their audience.

This same period saw the rise of a new, worldwide fervor for physical culture, which was itself closely linked to the rise of militant nationalism. Across Europe and Asia, people were embracing new technologies for building the body in the interests of nation. India was no exception, and the decades either side of 1900 saw a dramatic rise in the popularity of modern physical culture. Many borrowed European techniques of gymnastics and bodybuilding, and merged them with indigenous practices. One eventual result of such mergers was the now-dominant mode of postural yoga practice. There were several key players in the emergence of a physical culture-oriented yoga, including, perhaps most importantly, Swami Kuvalayananda, Shri Yogendra, and (more indirectly) Tirumalai Krishnamacharya.

In Europe and America, the newly emerging forms of postural yoga began to be assimilated into already present traditions of women's gymnastics. Some of these traditions grew out of the German *Gymnastik* movement, while others developed within "unchurched" Protestantism in the United States. At the same time, postural yoga innovators like Shri Yogendra were explicitly borrowing from these women's gymnastics traditions in the adumbration of modern day, health-oriented yoga practices. I claim that the female dominated, stretching classes of today's Hatha Yoga can be more profitably seen as developments within the Western "harmonial gymnastics" tradition than within Indian *haṭhayoga* per se.

Perhaps nobody has been as influential within posture-based, transnational yoga as T. Krishnamacharya, whose disciples (such as B. K. S. Iyengar) have been at the forefront of the popularization of *āsana* outside of India for at least half a century. During the 1930s, Krishnamacharya developed a system of dynamic *āsana* practice which was to become the basis for the many variants of Power Yoga, Vinyasa Yoga, Vinyasa Flow Yoga, and the various aerobic practices which often characterize yoga classes in the United States and elsewhere today. Known now as Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, this mode of practice represents a powerful synthesis of *haṭhayoga* principles likely influenced by popular pedagogical gymnastics.

Situating Transnational Anglophone Yoga

From the early to mid-nineteenth century onwards, certain sections of the educated Indian population began to sketch out a new vision of Hinduism which would be suited to the needs and aspirations of the day. Syncretic in nature, this modernized Hinduism sought to present a unified vision of Indian religion which would counter colonialist claims that Hindus were backward and superstitious in their beliefs and practices. The cultural organization known as the Brahmo Samaj is perhaps the best known mouthpiece for this new vision of Hinduism, which drew on European philosophy, Unitarianism, and Western esotericism, as well as creative reinterpretation of Indian scripture.[3]

[3] See De Michelis (2004) and Halbfass (1988).

Note also that "Hinduism" is itself a modern coinage. The term "Hindu" was used by early Muslim invaders to indicate the religiously and culturally diverse people inhabiting a particular region, i.e. the South Asian subcontinent. "Hinduism," on the other hand, is a construct that arose from the emergent discipline of comparative religion and was not (prior to this period) a standard self-designation for Indians. Its usage is closely linked to efforts to articulate a cohesive philosophical, religious, and cultural identity for modern India, such as those by Brahmo Samaj leaders Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) and Keshub Chandra Sen (1838–1884).

Swami Vivekananda was himself a member of the Brahmo Samaj and imbibed many of Sen's teachings. Sen had begun to adumbrate a revivalist version of "yoga" based on a modern, scientific vision of Hinduism, and Vivekananda was to greatly advance this project. He traveled to the United States and participated (without a prior invitation) at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893, where he made a profound impression on his audience. His book *Raja Yoga* (1896), part practical manual, part commentary on Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, was immensely important in the development of Western understandings of yoga. Many of the popular yoga guides published in Britain and America during the succeeding decades bear clear traces of his influence, and in some ways *Raja Yoga* can be considered as the public face of the transnational yoga renaissance.

The Status of *Haṭhayoga* in Transnational Anglophone Yoga

From the perspective of popular yoga today, the most striking thing about *Raja Yoga*, and many of the manuals which follow in its wake, is that they are devoid of teaching about *āsana*. In fact, Vivekananda uncompromisingly rejects the "entirety" of the physical practices of *haṭhayoga*: "We have nothing to do with it here, because its practices are very difficult, and cannot be learned in a day, and, after all, do not lead to much spiritual growth."[4] Elsewhere in his writing and speaking, Vivekananda routinely criticizes the practice of *āsana*, and similar slights against its efficacy and propriety are evident in much of the practical literature of yoga up to and beyond the 1930s.

There are important reasons for the dismissal of *āsana* practice from the new, modern corpus of yoga. For several centuries prior to Vivekananda, ascetics performing extreme bodily postures had become the stock-in-trade image of everything that was wrong with Indian religion. These images included some of what we would today recognize as *āsana*-practice, but also various other kinds of bodily mortification (*tapas*) such as holding one arm in the air for several years until it atrophied and the nails pierced the flesh of the palm; being buried alive for weeks on end; the ubiquitous bed of nails, and so on. Due to repressive measures on the part

[4] Vivekananda 2001 (1896, 20).

of the colonial forces in India from the late eighteenth century onwards, large groups of "sannyasins," "yogis," "sadhus," and "fakirs" (interchangeable terms in the East India Company lexicon) were forced into a life of mendicancy and yogic showmanship, thereby fulfilling post-hoc, well-established expectations of what a yogi should do.[5] While images of such figures (first in sketches, and later in photographs) had a distinct shock value for the European gaze, they were hardly the basis for a dignified Indian cultural revival. It is easy to see why they were deemed inappropriate for inclusion within the new yoga formulations of Vivekananda.

A similar hostility towards the practices and practitioners of *haṭhayoga* can be seen in the work of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), the co-founder of the Theosophical Society (est. 1875) and one of the most outspoken and influential interpreters of Indian religion of her day. Blavatsky claimed in 1881 that "neither modern Europe nor America had so much heard [of yoga] until the Theosophists began to speak and write."[6] While certainly hyperbolic, the claim is not altogether without reason. Expressions of disdain for *haṭhayoga* are frequent and striking in Blavatsky's work, as well as in the writings of her disciples. Alongside Vivekananda, the Theosophical Society helped to create the impression that *haṭhayoga* (along with *āsana* itself) was false, dangerous, and backwards. It would have no part in the new versions of yoga that Blavatsky and her organization would be so effective in promoting.

Similar attitudes are even evident in the first translations of *haṭhayoga* texts, such as those of Srisa Chandra Vasu. Vasu's were among the first and most popular editions of "classical" *haṭhayoga* available to a wide, English-speaking audience.[7] Vasu was an energetic contributor to the "Sacred Books of the Hindus" series, which was edited by his brother, (Major) Baman Das Basu. In the spirit of the Brahmo Samaj, and of Vivekananda himself, this series sought to promote a more liberal and broad interpretation of the Hindu scriptures which would be suited to modern, educated society in India. Vasu's works include such titles as *A Catechism of Hindu Dharma* of 1899 and *Daily Practice of the Hindus* of 1904, both syncretic visions of a unified Hinduism in theory and in practice. Not surprisingly, his translations of *haṭhayoga* texts bear many of the same judgments that are to be seen in the works of Vivekananda, Blavatsky, and others. In Vasu's view *haṭhayoga* practitioners are characterized by "bigotry and ignorance" and readers are warned to beware of "the danger of degenerating into haṭha Yoga."

In sum, there was little room in the new formulations of Hindu yoga for the *āsana* practices of *haṭhayoga*. It would take several more decades before posture practice would begin to be accepted into the fold of the new Hindu yoga.[8]

[5] See Pinch (2006).

[6] Blavatsky (1982, 104).

[7] See Vasu (1895) and (1915).

[8] Vasu (1915, 2 and 42).

The Physical Culture Revival

To a significant degree, popular posture-based yoga came into being as a result of interactions between the textual tradition of *haṭhayoga*, the neo-Hindu yoga renaissance, and the international physical movement. It is a striking coincidence that the staging of the first modern Olympics (in Athens in 1896) coincided with the publication of Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, and that the first ever modern bodybuilding display took place on 1 August 1893, the very day that Vivekananda himself arrived on Western soil.[9] Transnational anglophone yoga began to gain popularity at the same time as an unprecedented, worldwide fervor for physical culture. Their encounter would eventually yield some of the most characteristic systems of postural yoga today.

The nineteenth century saw the rise and spread of a number of new gymnastics systems, most influential of which was perhaps the Swedish gymnastics of Pier Heinrich Ling (1776–1839).[10] Systems based on Ling's work were commonly part of a project of nationalistic "man making": That is to say, building better bodies for use in the service of homeland. Physical culture was imbued with a clear ideological discourse, which valued manliness, morality, fair play and faith in God, and their embodiment in the world. In England, this cluster of ideology and somatic practice was developed and nurtured in public schools, becoming known as "muscular Christianity." The new athleticism was not confined to schools, however, but spread far and wide through the agency of charitable missionary agencies like the Salvation Army and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), and via the armed forces abroad.

Ling gymnastics was developed as a system of therapeutic movement (also being known, in fact, as "movement cure"). In a further layering of transnational exchange, it seems that Ling himself had taken inspiration from Chinese gymnastics. His, and other methods of free-standing, holistic exercise, emphasized care of the whole person, in a way that prefigured the "mind body spirit" emphasis of the YMCA, and of many branches of transnational yoga. Through the anglicized Indian schooling system, Ling gymnastics became extremely widespread in India, where it quickly prevailed over the previously predominant Maclaren gymnastics, which required costly apparatus and installation.

This paradigm of a health and hygiene regime for body and mind based on posture and "free" movement was to be formative in the emergent Indian physical culture movement, and would eventually shape both the practice and the conceptual framework of the new Hatha Yoga. For example, Vasu, in his 1895 translation of the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* asserts that the various postures to be found in the book are "gymnastics exercises, good for general health, and peace of mind."[11] While this may well be true, it also indicates the prevalence of a modern discourse of

[9] Dutton (1995, 9).

[10] See Dixon and McIntosh (1957) and Leonard (1947).

[11] Vasu (1895, xxv).

gymnastics over and against the context of earlier *haṭhayoga* and the unaccustomed paradigms it represented (such as the raising of *kuṇḍalinī*). Such comparisons of *haṭhayoga* and Swedish gymnastics were extremely common. Their use value was to provide a convenient and intelligible explanation of the function and form of *āsana*, and to some extent circumvented the need to engage with the rather more abstruse *haṭhayoga* theory. As we shall see, this association was solidified and greatly elaborated in the 1920s and 1930s by the pioneers of modern Hatha Yoga Shri Yogendra and Swami Kuvalayananda.

Bodybuilding

The term "bodybuilding" was coined in 1881 by the YMCA physical culturist Robert J. Roberts. But it is Eugen Sandow (1867–1925), the international star of physical culturism, who takes credit for initiating a worldwide revolution in bodybuilding, through his many publications, correspondence courses, and lecture tours. By the time of his trip to Asia in 1905, Sandow was already a legend in India.[12] Indeed, many physical culture experimentalists of the next generation remember Sandow's visit to India as a defining moment in their career, and stories about Indians challenging Sandow to trials of strength abound. Generally, in these narratives, Sandow declines the challenge because he recognizes—it is implied—the superior strength of the opponent. It is easy to see the importance of such stories in building the image of the Indian titan. Sandow's system was certainly influential in shaping the indigenous exercise revival from which modern postural yoga would emerge. Indeed, Joseph Alter has provocatively claimed that it was Sandow, and not Vivekananda or Shri Aurobindo, who exerted the greatest influence on popular modern yoga.[13] In the hands of many, systems like Sandow's (and also that of the American Bernarr Macfadden, 1868–1955) were reshaped into systems that combined Western and "indigenous" modes of exercise in order to build better bodies. One of the names that was given to this kind of project was, in fact, "yoga" (although in this context the term did not yet necessarily imply the practice of *āsana* but a range of physical culture exercises including lifting weights).[14] New Indian heroes of physical culture emerged, such as the international wrestler Ahmad Bux, the famous Gama the Great, and (Prof.) K. Ramamurthy, who claimed to be able to deadlift three times more weight than Sandow himself, and whose blends of yoga and modern bodybuilding were important forerunners of the 1920s postural revival.[15]

[12] See Budd (1997, 85).

[13] Alter (2004, 28).

[14] Singleton (2010, 95–111).

[15] See Alter (2000).

Young Men's Christian Association

No organization had a greater influence on the shape of physical culture in India in this period than the YMCA. Indeed, it was in the creation of hybridized, but distinctly Indian form of physical education that the "Y" contributed most significantly "to the making of modern India."[16] Their physical culture programs were designed to bring about moral and spiritual reform through proper use of the body, in much the same way as "muscular Christianity" was. These programs aimed at the even development of the threefold nature of man—mind, body, spirit—as symbolized by the famous inverted red triangle logo devised by YMCA thinker Luther Halsey Gulick. As such they were of a piece with the "holistic" vision of many systems of early European gymnastics. Within India, the YMCA encouraged the development of programs which combined Indian and Western physical culture. It was Harry Crowe Buck (1884–1943) who first incorporated the practice of *āsana* into the YMCA programs in the early 1920s,[17] but the YMCA's nurturing of the spirit of cross-cultural fusion in physical exercise no doubt facilitated the experimentalism of early *āsana* pioneers before this time, and outside the formal confines of the organization itself.[18] The YMCA not only altered the cultural status of physical education in India (which had been extremely low before), but also shaped the ontological function of bodily exercise. Partially as a result of this, modern postural yoga came to be perceived as a system for the holistic development of the individual in "mind, body and spirit," arguably a significant departure from the aspirations of traditional Hindu renouncer yogis.[19]

Degeneracy Narratives and Nationalist Physical Culture

From the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a growing awareness in India of the possibilities that physical culture held to raise the nation out of the "degeneracy" in which it was perceived to have sunk, and to lead them towards autonomous rule. This sense of degeneracy was in large part the result of stereotypes of the "effete Indian" promulgated by the colonial powers in contrast to the idealized, European "muscular Christian."[20] For example, Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the international scout movement, considered the task of colonial education in India as being "that great work of developing the bodies, the character and the souls of an otherwise feeble people."[21] Physical education programs, mainly based on

[16] David (1992, 17).
[17] Johnson (1979, 177).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Hausner (2007).
[20] Rosselli (1980).
[21] Sen (2004, 94).

Ling and Maclaren, were widespread in India. However, one of the outcomes of the colonial man-making project was the realization that the techniques and methods learned by Indians could be turned against their rulers.[22] The degeneracy myth itself became a powerful goad for Indians to build their bodies in the service of independence. While the new Indian physical culture movement retained a permeability to Western techniques (based on a deep appreciation for the benefits that modern exercise technology could bring them) it was often directed towards the overthrow of colonial authority.

Although the move towards independence is perhaps best remembered today within the framework of Ghandian non-violent resistance, the freedom struggle also involved a substantial element of "acts and threats of violence by revolutionary groups," as Lise McKean has pointed out.[23] Reworking and modernizing the image of the heroic *saṃnyāsin* (renunciant holy man) struggling to oust the foreign oppressor, authors like Bankimchandra Chatterjee did much to popularize a new movement of militant physical culturism, the breeding grounds of which were the new *akhāṛa*-gymnasia. His novel *Ānandamaṭh*, published in the early 1880s, was often interpreted as the assertion of a new religio-nationalist heroic identity for (Hindu) Indians, and was a key factor in the creation of a belligerent modern nationalist consciousness[24]. Key cultural figures like Sarala Debi (1872–1945), and Vivekananda disciple Sister Nivedita (née Margaret Elizabeth Noble, 1867–1911) drew on this spirit, as did Aurobindo Ghosh, the radical extremist and future modern yoga guru, who was himself inspired to translate Bankimchandra's novel in 1909. This physiological nationalism often referenced the mythos of the "fighting yogin" of yore, and the exercise regimes that were propagated were often referred to as "yoga." Clandestine fighters, like Sri Raghavendra Rao (pen name "Tiruka") traveled around the country instructing potential revolutionaries in "yoga techniques": "Outwardly, it was the teaching of yogasana, suryanamaskara, pranayama and dhyana," he wrote, "[but] at its core it was much more: preparation in physical fitness and personal combat methods … Thus 'yoga training' and physical culture became household words."[25] Tiruka studied with some of the most illustrious yoga teachers of the day, including Swami Sivananda, the Raja of Aundh, and Paramahamsa Yogananda, as well as with a range of physical culture luminaries like Rajaratna Manick Rao.[26] A famous wrestler, gymnast and militant revolutionary, Rao was a major figure in the semantic slide of the term "yoga" towards militant physical training (including combat training, fighting with weapons, and general fitness training with the

[22] Rosselli (1980).

[23] McKean (1996, 73).

[24] Chatterjee (2005).

[25] Tiruka (1983, x).

[26] The Raja of Aundh pioneered the modern system of *sūryanamaskār*, which was at the time not generallyconsidered a part of yoga. He is included here for the influence his system has had on modern posture practice.

expressed end of fighting). His most famous student, Swami Kuvalayananda (see next section), was quite simply the most influential proponent of postural yoga in India in the early twentieth century: It is not unreasonable to suggest that without him, *āsana* practice would not have gained the respectability and popularity that it did. Although it would be misleading to claim that modern posture practice uniquely arose from militant physical culture, this was certainly one of its definitive influences. Similar "militant" yoga regimes persist today, most notably in the mass *āsana* practices of groups like the Hindu nationalist RSS (Rasthriya Swayamsevak Sangh).[27]

Swami Kuvalayananda

It is important to remember that during the period under investigation, postural yoga was still very much in a process of creative development. In other words, many of the forms of practice which today pass for "yoga" in most of the globalized world were still to be formulated, and the final shape of modern posture practice was still in play. Swami Kuvalayananda (also known as Jagannath G. Gune, 1883–1966) was perhaps the most significant figure in promoting a modern renaissance of postural yoga as therapeutics and physical culture. As well as his training in physical culture and combat with Manick Rao, Kuvalayananda studied yoga (mainly *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*) for 2 years with the Vaiṣṇava guru Paramahamsa Shri Madhvadasji (1789–1921), who encouraged him to establish the teaching and research institute Kaivalyadhama, in Lonavla (near Mumbai) in 1921. Using the discourses and the paraphernalia of modern science, Kuvalayananda and his team set about presenting to the world the physiological benefits of *haṭhayoga* techniques, and legitimizing them in medical terms, and within a therapeutic paradigm. At the same time, he set out to "evolve a system of physical culture based on Yoga and to take steps to popularize that system."[28] Kuvalayananda worked at governmental level to popularize these new, physical, culture-inspired yoga sequences across India. Often dynamic in nature and performed to a drill count, some of these sequences are preserved in his book *Yaugik Saṅgh Vyāyam* ("yogic group exercise") of 1936. The mode of practice presented there may have been an influence on the aerobic postural sequences developed in the 1930s by T. Krishnamacharya in Mysore (of which more below). Kaivalyadhama's in-house journal, *Yoga Mīmāṃsā*, first published in 1924, and Kuvalayananda's book *Āsanas* of 1931, did much to spread his message of a health and fitness-oriented yoga practice through India and the world.

[27] See Alter (1994) and McDonald (1999).

[28] Gharote and Gharote (1999, 37).

Shri Yogendra

Like his contemporary Kuvalayananda, Shri Yogendra (also known as Manibhai Haribhai Desai, 1897–1989) took up yoga after many years of intensive study in modern physical culture. Also like Kuvalayananda, this reorientation occurred after meeting the guru Paramahamsa Shri Madhvadasji. In his youth, Yogendra's passions were wrestling, gymnastics, and physical culture, and these were the forerunners to his work in yoga. Indeed, Yogendra's writings on yoga are greatly influenced by the exercises, and the rhetoric, of modern physical culture. He set up his Yoga Institute near Bombay in 1918, and the following year traveled to America, giving what may be the first ever *āsana* demonstrations on US soil in 1921.[29] On his return to India, Yogendra directed his energies to providing scientific corroboration for the health benefits of yoga, and to creating simplified, accessible *āsana* courses for the general public. Yogendra perhaps did more than anyone (barring Kuvalayananda) to develop the kind of health and fitness-oriented yoga regimens that dominate the transnational yoga scene today, and to bring yoga out of secrecy and obscurity into the public eye. Yogendra's book *Yoga Asanas Simplified* of 1928 is a manual of *āsana* which "represents the essentials of yoga physical education."[30] It consists, in large part of free-standing, dynamically performed exercises from Ling gymnastics and from Johann P. Müller's enormously influential "system" of callisthenics and personal hygiene.[31] Although Yogendra dismisses Müller's system (along with the methods of Sandow, Delsarte, and MacFadden) as inferior fads, it is clear that he is deeply influenced by the techniques and discourses of international physical culture. His early publications, like *Yoga Asanas Simplified*, fed the growing appetite for information about *āsana* among health and fitness faddists of the time.

Iyer and Sundaram

Also important here is the work of the bodybuilder K. V. Iyer (1897–1980), who was the most high profile advocate of Indian physical culture at the time. He would often appear in international physical culture magazines, striking Grecian poses and showing off the "enormous development" of his body. Iyer's teaching and his popular correspondence courses were the practical expression of a "blending of the two Systems" of physical culture and yoga.[32] His student, collaborator, and friend in this enterprise was Yogācarya Sundaram, who ran the Yogic School of Physical Culture, and the two men regularly conducted lecture/demonstration tours

[29] Rodrigues (1997, 96).
[30] Yogendra 1989 [1928], 62.
[31] Müller (1905).
[32] Iyer (1930, 43).

together around the country. Sundaram's *Yogic Physical Culture* of 1928 is one of the earliest and most successful photographic do-it-yourself manuals of Hatha Yoga reconceptualized as gymnastics, personal hygiene, and bodybuilding. Sundaram reasons that although yoga used to be an entirely spiritual discipline, sedentary modern men and women might "utilise it as a system of physical culture."[33] His and Iyer's synthesis of bodybuilding and yoga presented a path to religious wholeness through the aesthetic perfection of the body, just as Sandow had conceived of his system as a "religion." It also responded to the nationalist degeneracy narratives examined above: Through this synthesis, writes Sundaram, "the sons of India [might] obtain super-strength to make their Mother an equal sister among Nations!."[34]

New Thought Yoga

Originally a breakaway faction of Mary Eddy Baker's Christian Science movement, New Thought was a popular, para-Protestant movement which preached the innate divinity of the self, and the power of positive thinking to actuate that divinity in the world, to the ends of greater personal health and wealth.[35] It is no exaggeration to say that elements of the New Thought ethos are to be found in a majority of popular anglophone yoga primers of the early twentieth century, and it seems to have been taken for granted, both by New Thought writers and popular yoga writers, that positive thinking, auto-suggestion and the this-worldly framework of New Thought were identical with the techniques and ends of yoga. Yoga books rubbed shoulders with New Thought books in the catalogues of popular esoteric publishers like L. N. Fowler and Co., and yoga manuals are often full of advertisements for New Thought titles. Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* was itself imbued with New Thought metaphysics, and subsequent authors like O. Hashnu Hara, R. Dimsdale Stocker and Sensanath Devendra Ramayandas were instrumental in reinforcing the impression that New Thought was simply a modern day expression of Indian yoga.[36]

The work of Yogi Ramacharaka is a particularly vivid example of this kind of intersection, and represents, in Carl Jackson's words, "the outer limits of New Thought's deep infatuation with India."[37] Ramacharaka was in all likelihood the pen name of the Chicago lawyer and New Thought luminary William Walker Atkinson (1862–1932), who authored a steady avalanche of yoga manuals and New Thought self-help books between about 1903 and 1927. His book *Hatha*

[33] Sundaram 1989 [1928], 4.

[34] Ibid. 129. For more on Iyer and Sundaram, see Goldberg (forthcoming) and Singleton 2010, 122–129).

[35] See Jackson (1975).

[36] De Michelis (2004, 168).

[37] Jackson (1975, 537).

Yoga, or the Yogi Philosophy of Physical Well-Being of 1904 is an early example of Hatha Yoga recast as Nature Cure and New Thought. While making clear that yoga postures are nothing but the circus tricks of fakirs, the book does recommend a range of gymnastic exercises combined with advice on personal hygiene, both set within the characteristic New Thought framework of autosuggestion and affirmation. It is a very clear example of the way yoga was being reformulated according to the tastes and needs of the day.

A number of unaffiliated Indian yogis operating on the West Coast of America in the early 1920s (as opposed to Westerners posing as Indians) emulate and expand the kind of New Thought-inspired physical culture that we see in Ramacharaka. They include figures like Yogi Gherwal, Yogi Wassan, Yogi Hari Rama, and Bhagwan S. Gyanee. Perhaps the best known "New Thought yogi" of the time, however, is Paramahamsa Yogananda (1893–1952), who would later author the immensely influential *Autobiography of a Yogi*. In 1923 the *Boston Post* called Yogananda "the Coué of gymnastics" in reference to Emile Coué's hugely popular doctrine of positive thought and mental healing.[38] Yogananda's techniques of muscular isolation through will power were almost certainly borrowed from the work of the world-famous bodybuilder Maxick, and melded discourses of yoga with those of New Thought-inspired physical culture. Yogananada's brother, Bishnu Charan Ghosh, himself a world-class bodybuilder, developed Maxick's system of "muscle control" (authoring a book of the same name in 1930) and fused it with a physical culture-oriented Hatha Yoga, which he taught widely. Ghosh's most famous student is Bikram Choudhury (b. 1946) whose 26 posture system, known as Bikram Yoga, is very popular in the United States, and continues the physical culture orientation of Ghosh's yoga experiments.[39]

Harmonial Gymnastics

One of the most important strands of yoga's transnational development is the tradition of women's gymnastics which grew up in Europe and America during the nineteenth century, and which I will refer to here as "harmonial gymnastics."[40] These regimes, often developed by and for women, privileged the physical as the locus of access to the divine, in what was sometimes a self-conscious rejection of the Calvinist denigration of the body within Protestantism.[41] These systems of stretching and "rhythmic breathing" in many cases prefigure the practice and theory of contemporary transnational Hatha Yoga. In many ways, the typical transnational

[38] Following Yogananda (1925, 44).

[39] More on Ghosh, Yogananda, and the New Thought yogis can be found in Singleton (2010, 129–141).

[40] With reference to Sydney Ahlstrom's term "harmonial religion" Ahlstrom (1972).

[41] See Fuller (2001).

Hatha Yoga class of today arguably owes more to these traditions of women's gymnastics than it does to the *haṭhayoga* systems handed down in the history of India.

The harmonial gymnastics tradition is exemplified in the work of the American Genevieve Stebbins (1857–c.1915), who had studied the theory of dramatic expression of François Delsarte (1811–1871) and reconfigured it into her own distinctive system. Her work, along with others, initiated a veritable Delsarte craze in the United States. Stebbins was a member of the Church of Light, "an order of practical occultism" with links to the influential esoteric group the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and she brought these esoteric influences to bear on her system which also incorporated the gymnastics systems of Mackaye and Ling, as well as Indian influences.[42] When, in *Raja Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda states that the postural practices of *haṭhayoga* can be found in "Delsarte and other teachers," he is probably thinking of the harmonial gymnastics regimes popularized by Stebbins.[43] Her book *Dynamic Breathing and Harmonic Gymnastics* of 1892 is a combination of callisthenic movement, deep respiration exercises, relaxation, and creative mental imagery within a harmonial gymnastic framework. It is, in Stebbins' words, "a completely rounded system for the development of body, brain and soul; a system of training which shall bring this grand trinity of the human microcosm into one continuous, interacting unison."[44] Stebbins' "American Delsartean training regimen" includes most of the elements that one would expect to find in a modern Hatha Yoga class, and was probably instrumental in paving the way for the popular conception of yoga as another means to "stretch and relax."

Another influential figures in the merger of yoga and harmonial gymnastics is the Memphis-born, self-styled *yoginī* Cajzoran Ali (b. 1903). Ali's method, as set out in her *Divine Posture Influence Upon Endocrine Glands* of 1928, locates the key to the ultimate spiritual truth of yoga in the individual body, and draws deeply on the understandings of the body popularized by New Thought. Her course of posture training and "breath culture" is designed to bring one into harmony with the God who is "individualized within you," and her "harmonial" yoga model is an important early precursor of New Age versions of (postural) yoga which emerged in the West from the 1970s onwards.[45] Similar experiments were going on at the same time in Britain, with the likes of Francis Archer and Mollie Bagot Stack, the founder of the most influential of women's gymnastics organizations in pre-WWII Britain, the Women's League of Health and Beauty. Stack had learned some yoga postures and relaxation techniques during a stay in India in 1912, and later incorporated them into her exercise regimes for modern British women (though never referred to as "yoga").[46] Once again, however, we have a combined program of dynamic

[42] On the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor see Godwin et al. (1995, ix).

[43] Vivekananda 2001 [1896], 20.

[44] Stebbins (1892, 57).

[45] Ali (1928), 15, see also De Michelis (2004), 184–186.

[46] Stack (1931).

stretches, rhythmic breathing, and relaxation within a "harmonial" framework which closely mirrors the creative modulations of many of today's Hatha Yoga classes. One compelling explanation for the apparent disjunction between such classes and more traditional Indian procedures, then, is that the latter stems in large part from the modern traditions of quasi-mystic body conditioning and callisthenics devised for women during the early part of the twentieth century. The fact that "harmonial" forms of exercise were the accepted and dominant modes of practice for women in the West well prior to the yoga booms of the 1960s and the 1990s may also help to explain why contemporary Hatha Yoga classes are, demographically speaking, also dominated by women.

T. Krishnamacharya

The contribution to transnational postural yoga of T. Krishnamacharya (1888–1989) is second to none, mainly thanks to the propagation and development of his teachings by influential students like K. Pattabhi Jois, B. K. S. Iyengar (his brother-in-law), Indra Devi, and T. K. V. Desikachar (his son). Although Krishnamacharya's teaching career spans seven decades of the twentieth century, it is the years spent in Mysore, from the early 1930s to the early 1950s, which have arguably had the greatest impact on the formation of radically physicalized forms of yoga around the globe. It was during this period that Krishnamacharya elaborated a system of practice based on aerobic sequences of *āsanas* joined by dynamic and repetitive linking sequences. The fashionable Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga method, as taught by K. Pattabhi Jois, is a direct development of this phase of Krishnamacharya's teaching, and has inspired many of the spin-off forms (like Power Yoga, Vinyasa Flow Yoga, and Power Vinyasa Yoga) which have burgeoned, particularly in America, since the early 1990s. According to the orthodox account of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga's origins, the system derived from an ancient text entitled *Yoga Kurunta*, which was transmitted to Krishnamacharya by his Tibet based guru, Rammohan Brahmachari, and subsequently discovered and transcribed by Krishnamacharya.[47] While this story may be true, it is also clear that the text functioned as a creative "teaching tool" throughout Krishnamacharya's life, and that its content changed according to the pedagogical needs of the master.[48] Given this, and the fact that Krishnamacharya only taught these sequences during this period in Mysore, it is worth investigating the possible that in developing such an intensely aerobic *āsana* method system, he was (like other modern yogis we have considered) responding to the pervasive physical culture zeitgeist of the time.

In 1933 Krishnamacharya began teaching *yogāsana* at the Jaganmohan Palace in Mysore, under the patronage of the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodiyar IV

[47] See introduction by Eddie Sterne in Jois (1999, xv–xvi).

[48] For more details, see Chap. 9 of Singleton (2010).

(1884–1940). The Maharaja was an avid supporter of physical culture education, energetically promoting the cause of the YMCA in Mysore state, and appointing a full-time organizer of physical education there from 1919, (Prof.) M. V. Krishna Rao. Thanks to Rao, the "indigenous system" of physical education was greatly revived in the state.[49] The Maharaja was also the patron of Iyer (see above), and of Iyer's student and teacher in Mysore, H. Anant Rao, who ran a branch of Iyer's gymnasium in the same wing of the Jaganmohan Palace where Krishnamacharya taught yoga. Krishnamacharya's remit was to teach yoga to the boys of the extended maternal royal family, the Arasus. It is noteworthy that, in the palace records, Krishnamacharya's yoga classes are consistently categorized as "physical culture" or "exercise," and are often mentioned alongside non-yogic physical activities. For example, in the palace report of 1938/1939 we read, "Sports, games and scouting continued to receive considerable attention. The boys entered the Dasara and other athletic Tournaments. A batch of students attended the Palace Yogasala."[50] These reports strongly suggest that the *yogaśālā* was principally conceived as a forum for developing the physical capacities of the young royals, with Krishnamacharya's classes seemingly functioning as an optional counterpart to physical education lessons. Significantly, a comparable version of dynamic *āsana* practice is still taught to children at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Chennai, where the teaching is known as *śruṣṭikrama* (literally: disciplined steps).[51]

It is important to note that this conceptual melding of *āsana* and physical culture was not confined to the royal classrooms of the Jaganmohan Palace, but was widespread in the schooling system across Mysore State and, indeed, across India, largely thanks to Swami Kuvalayananda (more on this below).[52] While Krishnamacharya no doubt added distinctive personal innovations, it would appear that the modality of practice is very much in keeping with standard pedagogical gymnastics of 1930s India. The relatively rapid progression of postures, together with a standardized drill count and the dynamic linking sequences, are all suggestive of the kind of practices that would have been familiar to many school students across India. On the basis of the history of yoga's merger with physical culture examined above, then, it is easy to see why such practices would have been considered suitable by Krishnamacharya for this particular time and place. Indeed, a similarly dynamic form of group *āsana* practice for youth had already been developed by Swami Kuvalayananda, whose work at governmental level in India had helped his innovations spread far and wide. It is possible that Krishnamacharya (who made a research trip to Kuvalayananda's institute in 1933) drew on these modes of practice in the development of his powerful, aerobic Hatha Yoga synthesis.

[49] Kamath (1933, 27).

[50] Following the *Jaganmohan Palace Administrative Records*, here in reference to the year 1938/1939, 9.

[51] Ramaswami (2000, 15).

[52] See Singleton (2010, 203–206).

It is also possible that such modes of practice drew, in turn, from the influence of Scandinavian gymnastics in general, and in particular from the Primitive Gymnastics of the Dane Niels Bukh (1880–1950), whose system was second only in popularity in India to Ling.[53] Bukh's system offers a complete course of stretching and strengthening exercises, graded (like the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga sequence) into six progressive sequences. At least 28 of the exercises in the first English edition of Bukh's manual are strikingly similar (if not identical) to yoga postures occurring in Pattabhi Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga sequence or in Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*.[54] Moreover, the dynamic, "jumping" format of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga is also present in Bukh's system, alongside the deep, "rough," *ujjayi* type breathing that also characterizes other forms of Asthanga Yoga. I point these similarities out not to suggest that Krishnamacharya borrowed from Bukh, but to indicate how closely his system matches one of the most prominent modalities of gymnastic culture in India at the time.

Conclusion

It would be easy to conclude from evidence of the kind presented above that postural yoga was "invented" or "created" during a relatively short period of time in the early twentieth century. It seems to me, however, that this would be incorrect, and perhaps a function of a kind of categorical thinking that inhibits more nuanced historical investigation. Within the transnational postural yoga community, in particular, there is a marked tendency, when faced with this kind of information, to want to know which postures are old and which are new, and to overlook larger contextual questions. One might speculate that this is in part a residual habit of mind left over from the controversy among yoga practitioners created by Norman Sjoman's *The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace* (first published in 1996) which claimed a recent derivation for many of the individual postures in the *āsana* lexicon of Krishnamacharya and his students (in particular the standing poses). Sjoman's work is certainly far more nuanced than this trend gives it credit for. Above and beyond the perils of "origins speak" (especially when it comes to the ways that humans have used their bodies through time), this way of proceeding draws attention away from a far more interesting and rich quarter of inquiry: How cultural, religious, and philosophical meanings become attached to physical practice, whether it be yoga or gymnastics, and how these accreted meanings inevitably change the way people approach these disciplines. Such a focus tells one far more about the cultural meaning of a particular posture (or set of postures) than does the attempt to hang a date on it.

[53] Gray (1930, 7).

[54] Bukh (1925) and Iyengar (1966).

Now, it is true that "gymnastic" systems from the early twentieth century did in fact routinely utilize positions that would today be instantly recognizable as yoga *āsana*. Physical culture journals are full of representations of these postural shapes. Some of these postures are obviously new additions to the postural canon of yoga, and some are obviously not. But this kind of itemization stops short of saying anything about the broader contexts within which these postures were employed, and the transnational exchanges which informed their meaning. To take one instance: A shape very much like shoulder stand (*sarvāṅgāsana*) was the emblem of the British Women's League of Health and Beauty during the 1920s. It was not associated with yoga, but rather had its own characteristic set of meanings. It helped one to stay young, trimmed fat around the waist and so on. A similarly shaped posture is also to be found in medieval Indian *haṭhayoga*, where it is called "a secret in all the tantras."[55] What is important here is not whether the Women's League posture is old, nor even whether it is derived from pre-modern Indian yoga per se, but the accretions of cultural meaning which make it distinct from the posture in the Indian *haṭhayoga* systems. In probability, the "modern," cosmetically-oriented posture was inspired by Indian yoga traditions. But it is no longer the same posture as that outlined in *haṭhayoga* texts.

The same holds true for modern, anglophone yogas more generally: By virtue of their position in a dynamic, transnational nexus of knowledge and practice, in which divergent discourses compete for ascendency, it makes little sense to speak of a single, unitary yoga. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, to do so would be to enact a kind of "genesis amnesia" which views history as a fait accompli, or as pure synchrony.[56] When Vivekananda declared, in *Raja Yoga*, that "From the time it was discovered, more than 4,000 years ago Yoga was perfectly delineated, formulated and preached in India," he is invoking those very "mysteries of pre-established harmony" and "prodigies of conscious orchestration" that Bourdieu sees as generative of the appearance of objective meaning.[57] However, transnational yoga is anything but objective. It grew, perhaps like all tradition, out of a dialectical exchange between precedent and innovation according to the needs of the day, and it continues to mutate and develop. What is important about yoga in the modern age, however, is the unparalleled pace of change, and the quite bewildering range of meanings that have become attached to it since at least the nineteenth century, as yoga began to expand and adapt beyond the borders of India.

[55] *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 3.32, translation mine.
[56] Bourdieu (1977, 79).
[57] Vivekananda 2001 [1896], 134.

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Magic and Yoga: The Role of Subcultures in Transcultural Exchange

Suzanne Newcombe

Abstract From the perspective of modern yoga studies, magic and witchcraft have largely held the place of disinherited siblings. This chapter will explore how the development and contemporary practice of yoga in Britain overlaps and parallels the practice of magic. It will explore overlapping networks where those interested in the occult, esoteric, and non-institutional Christian religiosity and spirituality interacted, highlighting the role of Watkins Bookstore, Paul Brunton, and The Atlantis Bookstore. It will further explore the significance of literary agent Gerald Yorke who was influential in both the world of magic and that of yoga. The paper will conclude by examining the magical elements of contemporary yoga practice in terms of anti-aging, empowerment, and mythical inspirations. This paper argues that to better understand the historical development of yoga in the twentieth century or the transformative element of modern yoga practice, scholars need to take into account the continuing similarities and differences between the contemporary practice of yoga and magic.

Introduction

Recent research has made it clear that (1) there is something that can be recognized as "modern yoga" and (2) this "modern yoga" was created with a complex exchange between "East" and "West." What is now understood as a distinctly modern form of yoga was created in dialogue with Western culture through several distinct avenues.[1] In Britain alone, for instance, yoga entered the society through philosophical lectures of the Theosophical Society, personal appearances and

[1] For the purposes of modern yoga "Western culture" can be understood to primarily consist of Europe, the United States, and the anglophone Commonwealth nations; although yoga is now

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letters of Vivekananda, physical culture clubs like The Women's League of Health and Beauty and bodybuilding classes and publications (e.g. *Health & Strength* magazine), the teaching of international religious gurus, and government-funded evening classes in adult education institutes.[2] Therefore, the importance of transculturality for the creation of modern yoga should be considered not just between cultures as delineated by national borders, but also between the subcultures within a particular national context.[3] Rather than understanding yoga as a distinct tradition which has been transformed and impinged upon by Western esotericism, I would argue that empirical evidence from the twentieth century shows that yoga (i.e. both "historical texts" and techniques with effects towards *citta vrtti nirodha,* i.e. the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind) might be better understood as a "transcultural resource" used by both individuals and groups in a variety of ways. As this chapter highlights, subgroups within Western culture have understood yoga in ways distinct to their own aims and practices. The concept of what yoga "is" and "is not" within Western society has been shaped by these subcultural agendas and dialogues. The aim of the paper is to draw out some of the more esoteric background that has influenced the general assumptions and attitudes towards that which is called "yoga."

I will argue that it is not accurate to view yoga and contemporary esoteric magic as entirely separate phenomena. While most modern yoga practitioners have no knowledge or interest in contemporary magical traditions, practitioners of magic often openly acknowledge drawing from both the Western esoteric tradition and the Indian traditions of yoga and tantra.[4] Methodologically this paper will first present social historical research on the overlap between yoga and magic in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by a brief exploration of yoga and "magic" as understood by contemporary practitioners based on sociological methodology.[5] This chapter will focus on the case of Britain in the twentieth century, but it is likely that the web of associations between magic and yoga, and the dialogue between yoga's use in various subcultures, could be found in other national and transnational contexts. We can gain a more comprehensive understanding of European religiosity and spirituality since the Victorian age—and what yoga "is" in its

spreading in South and Central America and former Soviet states, this could be seen as a later phase of development.

[2] Newcombe (2009).

[3] My understanding of the term "culture" follows largely from the work of Raymond Williams (1981) and (1988) who emphasized the term's complexities, class implications, and changing use over time. In particular I would highlight his explanation that ". . .the steadily extending social and anthropological use of culture and cultural and such formations as sub-culture (the culture of a distinguishable smaller group) has . . . either bypassed or effectively diminished the hostility and its [the English word culture's] associated unease and embarrassment" Williams (1988, 92).

[4] For examples see Bogdan (2006), Evans (2007a, b), and Granholm (2005).

[5] In particular the second half of the paper is based upon my work at Inform (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) which provides as objective and up-to-date information as possible about a variety of new, alternative, and minority religious and spiritualities. Through this work I have had contact with a wide variety of magical groups.

contemporary global context—by understanding how "mainstream" yoga and magical practices continue to be intimately related.

The Early Twentieth Century: Overlapping Networks

The influence of the "esoteric milieu" on Vivekananda has been explored by Elizabeth De Michelis, yet this connection is only a small part of the mutual influence between the two traditions which, I will argue, continued throughout the twentieth century. Both the yoga and occult milieus had their roots in a diffuse network that was relatively insular in size and composition. Before the 1960s, the milieus in which people explored yoga and magic overlapped greatly; in fact anyone interested in non-Christian religiosity would touch upon the same booksellers and publishers. Yoga was a subject of interest for both those that identified as "yogis" and those that saw themselves as occultists.

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1874 by Helen Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Henry Olcott (1832–1907), became a meeting point for all those interested in non-Christian religiosity. Its name translating as the "wisdom of God," the Theosophical Society was (and continues to be) a complex organization with its own evolving theology.[6] However, it also served as a meeting point for others interested in psychic and spiritual phenomena. For example, Ernest Wood, the future author of the Penguin book *Yoga* (published in 1959), began his interest in yoga by enthusiastically exploring the scientific testing of psychic phenomena at his local branch of the Theosophical Society.[7] A respectful study of world religions was important to the Theosophical Society, although its success in this ideal is debatable. But more influential for the future of yoga than Theosophical theology was the Theosophical networks of people and publishing enterprises. For example, the first official "Hindu missionary," Vivekananda, was sponsored on his trips to Britain by two former members of the Theosophical Society who used their networks to find an audience for Vivekanada's lectures.[8] Likewise, Hari Prashad Shastri, a teacher of what was called Adhyatma Yoga, also was first introduced to students in Britain via lectures at the Theosophical Society in 1933.[9] These kind of interconnections abounded through what has been termed the "occult underground" of fin de siècle Britain.[10]

Central to the network of esoteric spirituality in early twentieth century Britain was Watkins' Bookshop in London. Watkins' had its origins as a Theosophical

[6] For an overview of Theosophical history, see Campbell (1980).

[7] Wood (1936, 78).

[8] Beckerlegge (2000, 143–179).

[9] *Self-Knowledge* formerly *Shanti Sevak,* Vol. 1 No. 1, Autumn 1950, back cover. Shastri taught Advaita Vedānta and his organization, still extant is known as the Shanti Sadan.

[10] See Webb (1974) for more information about the "occult underground."

distributor; the founder of Watkins' Bookshop, John Maurice Watkins (1862–1947) was a personal friend and secretary to the Theosophical Society founder Blavatsky.[11] John Watkins began distributing Theosophical Society books, largely published at the society's headquarters in India, to subscribers in England from stock lists from 1893. Watkins' Bookshop became independent from the Theosophical Society in 1896 and the list expanded to encompass a wide variety of specialist religious, esoteric, and occult titles. From 1901, Watkins operated from a shopfront in Cecil Court off Charing Cross Road. Its central location and specialist expertise made Watkins' Bookshop a gathering point for those interested in esotericism, unusual religions, and "rejected knowledge." John Watkins fostered an atmosphere of comfortable discussion; in the interwar period he served tea in his office to regular visitors, among who were prominent esoteric and cultural figures such as William Butler Yeats, George William Russell, Aleister Crowley, George Robert Stow Mead, and Arthur Edward Waite.[12]

John Watkins' only son Geoffrey [Nigel] Watkins (1896–1981) took over the running of the bookshop for most of the twentieth century.[13] The popular writer on Buddhism and Eastern spirituality of Buddhism, Alan Watts (1915–1973), described the role of Watkins' Bookshop in his early self-education. According to Watts, Geoffrey Watkins ran

> the most magical bookshop in the world, and is the most unobtrusively enlightened person I have ever known... He sells books on Oriental philosophy, magic, astrology, Masonry, meditation, Christian mysticism, alchemy, herbal medicine, and every occult and far-out subject under the sun. But he himself has, if you will take his own advice, perfect discrimination in what one should read, for he knows that much of this literature is superstitious trash. ... [and he became] my trusted advisor on the various gurus, pandits and psychotherapists then flourishing in [1930s] London.[14]

The importance of Watkins' Bookshop as a hub of esoteric knowledge continued well into the 1970s when the bookshop was sometimes described as an "event" with browsers networking together, sharing information about spiritual teachers and techniques.[15] Thus Watkins' Bookshop was an important location for finding information about Indian teachers and yoga as well as the occult and magical worlds more generally.

The extent of the overlap between the occult and yoga can also be evidenced by the extent to which Aleister Crowley and the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) used Indian yoga and tantra texts for inspiration.[16] In Germany the OTO was co-founded by Theodor Reuss (1855–1923), a former member of the Theosophical Society who

[11] Personal interview with Jim Pym, 7 July 2005; Pym worked in Watkins' Bookshop in the 1970s and reported this association as common knowledge.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Gilbert (2004) and Raine (1982).

[14] Watts (1972, 107).

[15] Personal interview with Jim Pym.

[16] Djurdjevic (2012).

had a significant interest in Indian tantra, having published the *Lingam-Yoni: Oder die Mysterien des Geschlechts-Kultus* in 1906.[17] The OTO was originally inspired by rituals of freemasonry, with a series of degrees and initiations into "mysteries."[18] This could perhaps be understood as a project of individual growth towards becoming a more fully self-aware being; a symbolic and ritual aid to the unfolding of entelechy.[19] Crowley, who became a member of the OTO, was well aware of Reuss and their work in esoteric magic contains similarities as well as differences. Aleister Crowley's *Book Four* (published in 1913) has been a seminal text for twentieth century magical traditions.[20] The first half of this text was a rendering of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* with some techniques related to *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. The second half was an introduction to magical rituals from a more Western esoteric perspective (consisting of ritual magic with the use of wands and other props). The required reading list for a first grade "student" in Crowley's system included Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga,* the *Śivasaṃhitā*, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā,* Taoist teachings by Kwang Tze, as well as Crowley's works to date.[21]

Also in 1913 was the publication of Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power* (under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon) which has been noted by both occult and yoga circles as an influential publication. Woodroffe was most probably an initiate of Shiva Chandra Vidyannarva Bhattacharya, a tantric guru popular amongst middle-class Bengalis in Calcutta and the translations were likely collaborative works with other Bengali initiates.[22] Drawing on translations of Indian tantric scriptures for inspiration, the practice of New Age tantra (as it has developed into a tradition in the twentieth century) involves the harnessing of the orgasm for magical purposes.[23] Such purposes can be either for self-transformation or more mundane goals, e.g. Crowley allegedly focused on sexual magic in an attempt to gain wealth.[24] In the 1940s Henrik Bogdan's research has shown that an (as yet unknown) "Indian guru" was involved with OTO tantric rituals in London. Bogdan further argues that it was in the New Isis Lodge of the OTO, active in London between 1955 and 1962, that Indian tantra was systematically connected to Western sexual magical practices.[25] The significance of Indian tantra for contemporary magical groups is underlined by the use of the "left hand" path of magic, a direct

[17] Evans (2007a, b).

[18] King (1973).

[19] Evans (2007a, b).

[20] Singleton (2009), 64–70 discusses an overlap in popular perception of yogis and magicians in publications.

[21] Crowley (1913, 1938). Crowley went on to write a book entitled *Lectures on Yoga* (1939) and a number of articles in *Equinox* explicitly paralleling "magical" and "mystical" systems, e.g. "Uniting with a Deity" or "Bhakti Yoga."

[22] For a biography of Woodroffe see Taylor (2001).

[23] Urban (2003a), 203–281, Love (2010).

[24] Urban (2003b).

[25] Bogdan (2006, 2010).

reference to inspiration from tantric scriptures.[26] This overlap continues in the more mainstream yogic subculture with, for example, pop-star Sting giving "tongue-in-cheek" interviews implying that yoga has improved his sex life, and groups like Tara Yoga in Britain explicitly teaching "yogic techniques" to enhance "sexual continence."[27]

A second central London bookstore, The Atlantis Bookstore, also became significant as a hub for those interested in non-Christian religiosity and "rejected knowledge." The Atlantis was co-founded by Michael Houghton and Paul Brunton (1898–1981); Brunton can be credited with popularizing Ramana Maharshi and Indian spirituality with his book *A Search in Secret India*, published in 1934. This spiritual travelogue, detailing personally transformative meetings with mystics and holy men was reissued many times and is still in print, testifying to its enduring influence. In 1971, the popular UK glossy magazine *Yoga & Health* claimed that Brunton's books have "probably turned more people onto the path of Yoga than any other books of their kind."[28] However, it is also significant that Brunton's background included extensive influence from the occult subcultures of London. During the 1920s, Brunton was writing articles in the journals *Success* and *Occult Review* with the name of Raphael Hurst (a more mystical version of his birth name Ralph Hurst).[29] Hurst/Brunton also wrote a biographical piece on Allen Bennett (1872–1923) whom he claimed to have met. Bennett was very likely the first Englishman to become an ordained Buddhist monk in Burma in 1903.[30] Before taking this decisive step, Bennett learned Hatha Yoga techniques in Sri Lanka and taught these techniques to Aleister Crowley.[31] The name-dropping used by Brunton within the milieu at the time emphasizes how close occult, magical, yogic, and Buddhist interests were to each other during this period.[32]

In 1922 Brunton and Houghton opened a bookshop on Museum Street near the British Museum and Library in London to provide easier access to titles in alternative spirituality. Over time, their bookstore, the Atlantis Bookshop, began to specialize in European magical traditions (e.g. historical alchemy, hermeticism, as well as new paganism). In 1935, The Atlantis had established its own small publishing company, The Neptune Press, to release esoteric and occult titles. Sometime in the 1930s or 1940s, Brunton and Houghton parted company and Houghton retained the ownership of the Museum Street bookshop. After Brunton's departure, the Neptune Press made a turn towards European esotericism more

[26] Evans (2007a, b), 177–188 and Granholm 2005.

[27] See *The Irish Times,* 16 November 1996, *The New York Times Online: News and Features, 2010 (*http://nymag.com/nymetro/nightlife/sex/columns/nakedcity/n_9954/. Accessed 30 May 2010) and personal communications with London Tara Yoga 2010, but see http://www.tarayogacentre.co.uk/. Tara Yoga is a branch of the Movement for Spiritual Integration in Absolute (MSIA) founded by the Romanian Gregorian Bivolaru.

[28] *Yoga & Health* 1971, 46.

[29] Thurston (1989), 46, 47 and 127.

[30] Brunton (1941).

[31] Crowley (1989), 239–244 and also Crow (2008).

[32] Also see Owen (2006).

apparent when it published Aleister Crowley's works and also put out pagan revivalist Gerald Gardner's practical book *High Magic's Aid* in 1949, which marked the beginning of a public paganism in Britain (and perhaps a "post-Christian" era).[33]

But like Watkins', the Atlantis continued to see the intersection of occult and yoga groups in its cliental through the 1970s and beyond. Geraldine Beskin worked at The Atlantis from 1965 and remembers the books and clientele of the period. Beskin recalls that Yogi Ramacharaka on *prāṇāyāma*[34] and Arthur Avalon's *Serpent Power* sold "endlessly." Like Watkins, the Atlantis served as a meeting place for the new "1960s" subcultures and from the late 1960s. While the Atlantis did not hold meetings itself, it had a notice board upon which people could post messages for friends as well as open invitations to meeting and events.[35] The so-called "dropouts," hippies, and young protesters were choosing lifestyles deliberately different from those of society in general. Beskin remembers that yoga practice was a popular activity for many of her customers in the late 1960s and 1970s: "Many in this group used yoga as a devotional practice, part of being vegetarian, changing your life, contraception loomed large and tantric sex. Yoga became part of people's devotion practice . . . and was a way of saying that I'm an alternative person."[36] The youth culture of the period used yoga in a new way that complemented its experimental lifestyles. Yoga, in turn, became associated with this group of people, a variation in the theme of non-Christian subcultures that had been associated for over a hundred years.

Further Overlaps: Publishers and Gerald Yorke

Someone who should be recognized as a profound influence on the shape modern yoga took within Britain is Gerald Yorke (1901–1983). He was active "behind the scenes" as an advisor on esoteric and Eastern religions for Rider publishers, and later Allen & Unwin. These publishers were largely responsible for respectable publications in the field of non-Christian spirituality in Britain. It was Yorke's recommendations that led in 1944 to the publication of Theos Bernard's *Hatha Yoga* in Britain as well as in 1953 to Yesudian and Haich's *Yoga and Health*. Most significantly for modern yoga, Yorke ensured the publication of Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*.[37] Most likely in the summer of 1962, one of Iyengar's London students

[33] Personal interview with Geraldine Beskin, 12 January 2007. For the idea of a "post-Christian" era see McLeod (2007).

[34] For more on Ramacharaka/Atkinson see Singleton (2007) and a forthcoming biography by Philip Deslippe.

[35] Personal interview with Geraldine Beskin, 12 January 2007.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Regarding the claims of the influence of this book, see, for example, a recent *New York Times* article called Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* the "most widely read book on modern yoga" (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/books/review/Mishra-t.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=books, accessed

circulated Yorke Iyengar's manuscript for *Light on Yoga* at a Buddhist Society summer event. In the years between seeing the manuscript and *Light on Yoga*'s publication in early 1966, Yorke exerted extensive editorial influence on the manuscript—in particular the introductory section. Many years later, Iyengar (b. 1918) wrote that "Though I was a teacher with 30 years experience, I had never attempted to write even an article on yoga. Also my English in those days was not good."[38] Iyengar went on to say:

> In his admonitions about my style, Mr. Yorke was as forceful as my guru, Sri T. Krishnamacharya, was about my yoga. … His encouragement was my touchstone, spurring me to express my thoughts in as exact and precise a form as possible. Since … [the editing of *Light on Yoga*] I hold him to be my "literary guru." [39]

Yorke's personal story highlights the deeply interlocking milieu of magic and Eastern religiosity in pre-World War II Britain. He received a first in the History Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge where he expressed a skeptical interest in the supernatural and occult.[40] After leaving university he explored a variety of esoteric and alternative religions flourishing in 1920s London including the Mazdaznan Society and associating with Aleister Crowley, submitting to him copies of a diary of spiritual practices and providing him with financial support. During this time, Yorke took several retreats to practice magic and meditation. He wandered in "native garb" in North Africa for several months in 1930 and in 1931 spent 2 months "practicing yoga" in a Welsh cave. Yorke then broke with Crowley and traveled in China for a few years, experiencing life inside Buddhist monasteries.[41] When Yorke returned to Britain in 1936, he established a respectable lifestyle. He also, however, kept a quiet interest in Crowley, corresponding as a friend but not disciple, collecting and preserving Crowley's work, compiling bibliographies and writing introductions to reprints. Today Gerald Yorke's name is frequently found as a footnote to books on magic in reference to the collection of Crowley's papers that he deposited at the Warburg Institute at the University of London.[42]

Yorke also continued to have a personal interest in yoga, corresponding with Iyengar's guru, Krishnamacharya. He was keen to get Krishnamacharya to write "a spiritual and practical book for the west on *kuṇḍalinī* and the transmutation of the sexual and vital forces."[43] Yorke was keen to "reveal kundalini as a spiritual

15 September 2010). Although, for many worldwide, Swami Vishnu-devananda's *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* (1959) is a close second in worldwide influence.

[38] Iyengar (1993), xx.

[39] Ibid., xx–xxi.

[40] Verter (1997), 175–198 in his Ph.D. thesis Verter provides a short biography of Gerald J. Yorke based on primary source research.

[41] Verter (1997), 192 and Yorke (1935).

[42] For a more comprehensive presentation of Yorke and his influence see Richmond (2011).

[43] Yorke to Unwin. 24 August 1965 (Allen & Unwin Archives).

science instead of some unintelligible nonsense dealing with Sex [sic], which is the average western [sic] viewpoint."[44] He even went so far as to visit Krishnamacharya in Madras (now Chennai) with a view to writing this book in early 1966.[45] It is likely that Yorke's interest in specific tantric elements of yoga partially stemmed from his experience in Crowley's understanding of "magick," and knowledge of its contemporary occult practices in Britain at that time. His agenda in uniting scientific thinking and *kuṇḍalinī* techniques provides further evidence of Alex Owen's argument that science and religion continued to be intertwined in occult circles in the early twentieth century.[46]

In conclusion, the cultural distinctions between yoga as magic and yoga as physical culture did not become clear until much later than is popularly assumed given the respectable place of yoga practice in the early twenty-first century. The practices of occult magic and modern yoga were clearly largely distinct in some circles by the 1960s in Britain—so much so that yoga was an acceptable leisure activity for middle-class housewives to participate in at local authority, subsidized, adult education evening classes.[47] But what housewives were actually doing with their yoga practice might be closer to contemporary magical practice than they or their husbands imagined.

Yoga as Magic

Although in pre-1950s Britain, there was an acknowledged overlap between yoga, magic, and the occult, the overt overlap between these groups is now very slight. Very few magical practitioners would self-identify with yoga and few, if any, practitioners of modern yoga would identify with the idea of magic for their chosen discipline. Despite the lack of an overlap in self-description between the contemporary practice of yoga and magic, I would like to argue that the contemporary practice of modern postural yoga continues to have significant aspects in common with the practice of magic.

The most common typology for understanding the diversity of groups teaching yoga in the contemporary world is that proposed by De Michelis.[48] While she delineates groups with distinct emphasis on postural, doctrinal, and meditational aspects of yoga, it is also the case that, when considering a particular manifestation of modern yoga, there is often an overlap between these categorizations; for example Sivananda Yoga centers have a strong emphasis on both doctrine and

[44] Yorke to Krishnamacharya. 25 August 1965 (Allen & Unwin Archives), punctuation, and capitalization as in the original.

[45] Yorke to Unwin. 9 January 1966 (Allen & Unwin Archives).

[46] Owen (2004).

[47] Newcombe (2007).

[48] De Michelis (2004, 188).

postural practice. The modern yoga discussed in this paper is assumed to have a focus on postural aspects; but within this group, I would argue that there is a spectrum of involvement in modern postural yoga from the "purely physical" to the intensely religious. The degree to which the practice of modern yoga could be understood to overlap with the practice of magic also spans a spectrum.

Even more than the contemporary practice of yoga, the contemporary practice of magic is characterized by its diversity. The huge variety of beliefs and practices encompassed within the magical spectrum includes solitary "hedge witches" which use folklore, divination, and a relationship with nature to solve personal and communal problems for themselves and their clients; to organized pagan groups like Wiccan covens, druids, and Odinists[49]; and to occult groups like the OTO which are based on Masonic rituals.[50] This chapter is not the place to provide adequate descriptions of any of these groups, however short aspects of their practices will be described in comparative context where appropriate.

Before we explore how modern yoga might continue to be seen as a magical discipline, we need a working definition of magic. "Magic" is a word as hard to define as "ritual" or "religion." Most academic understandings of magic emphasize continuity with the Western esoteric traditions of alchemy and the Italian Renaissance. Aleister Crowley has been very influential for anglophile practitioners' understanding of magic (although Crowley is not directly acknowledged by all traditions) so it might be wise to start with his definition of magic. Crowley defined "magick" as "the art and science of causing change in accordance with your will." In spelling magic with a "k" on the end, for both esoteric and exoteric reasons, Crowley sought to define his interest as something different than stage magic, miracles, or claims to be able to change the laws of nature. The central tenet of his magical system, called Thelma, is the injunction to "Do what thy wilt"; not understood to mean "do whatever you like." Rather, the concept of will is more to do with a Nietzsche's Zarathustra who proclaimed "become who you are" and the idea that there is an essential core of being to some extent outside of social restrictions and received morality. Thelma, and the contemporary practice of "magick," offers those that follow its path, the "Great Work" of "self-realization."[51]

The founder of much of modern conceptions of witchcraft, Gerald Gardner, had some personal contact with Crowley; the Wiccan use of magic has both similarities and differences to that of Thelma. Typically, both solitary witches and coven-based Wiccans combine the injunction towards self-development with something similar to the yogic concept of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), into the directive "An it harm none, do what ye will."[52] Through the interpretation of this maxim (called a *Rede* by pagans) there is an emphasis on taking responsibility for the results of one's actions within many of the pagan traditions. However, many heathen/Odinist and druid

[49] For more information on these groups see Hutton (1999, 2007).

[50] See King (1973).

[51] Crowley (1929) is a good summary of Crowley's system.

[52] This saying, but not its sentiment, appears to have developed after Gardner.

groups find this Wiccan *Rede* too simplistic in its presentation of harm and apparent acceptance of conventional morality. Most of those who work from the pagan tradition also use magic as a path towards realization of a "higher self."

As Arthur Versluis explains "Magic and alchemy encompass all the lesser disciplines towards a higher goal: the realization of one's inherent divinity."[53] In his *History of British Magic After Crowley*, Dave Evans provides a definition that emphasizes the self-understanding of magical practitioners:

> Volitional acts of a ritual nature with an intent of somehow changing the perceived universe and/or the internal consciousness of the operator [or witness(es) or "target(s)"] through means not entirely understood by modern science, and acts not performed primarily to an audience for entertainment and/or financial reward.[54]

With this definition we can see some overlap with the practice of magic and that of yoga in contemporary Britain. Modern yoga practice typically has a ritual element. Some popular systems, e.g. Bikram Yoga or "Mysore style" practice as taught by Pattabhi Jois and his students,[55] involve exactly the same sequence of *āsana* being performed at each session. Others, such as Hatha Yoga or Iyengar Yoga tend to have a more flexible but still a systematic arrangement of *āsana* within a session. Many modern yoga practitioners are interested in effecting a change in their "internal consciousness." For some this might be articulated within a spiritual framework, while others would be more likely to describe the change of consciousness more simply as "relaxation" or a reduction in "stress."[56]

The idea of uniting the self with the infinite or divine is also the central theology of yoga emphasized by those who seek to highlight the "ultimate" or "true" purpose of the discipline. Norman Sjoman describes some "righteous and enthusiastic" contemporary yoga practitioners as treating their *āsana*-based practice as "a symbolic-magic complex under a pseudo-scientific garb."[57] He further defines the "symbolic-magic complex" of modern yoga practitioners as "a means of exploration of the conscious and the unconscious" and the use of the practice as a "vehicle of transcendence."[58] Furthermore, Stuart Starbacker emphasizes continuity of concepts throughout the yoga traditions into contemporary practice, noting in particular what he terms the logic of the "cessative" and the "numinous"; the cessative being an area where the "removal of either physical or metaphysical illness figures quite prominently, given the fact that it offers a spectrum of possibilities that range from physiologically rooted problems (such as diabetes) to ultimate questions of teleology (such as suffering and liberation from it)."[59]

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[53] Versluis (1986). With thanks to Ken Reece for highlighting this source.

[54] Evans (2007b), 17.

[55] See Nevrin (2008) and Smith (2004, 2007, 2008) for a more detailed exploration of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga of Pattabhi Jois.

[56] Hasselle-Newcombe (2005).

[57] Sjoman (1999, 47).

[58] Ibid., 48.

[59] Starbacker (2008, 165–166).

Starbacker also suggests continuity between the cessative goals of yoga and rituals of exorcism. In terms of the numinous aspect of modern yoga practice, Starbacker sees a continuity with the more overtly magical *siddhi* attainments mentioned in yogic texts with the virtuoso mastering of the "elemental forces that are determinative of his or her psychophysical existence" and the emphasis on the "transformative or purifying nature of developing heat" within several *āsana*-focused modern yoga traditions.[60]

In Britain, this "ultimate goal" of yoga has found two different kinds of expression in the two main organizations that promoted yoga in the adult education instructions, namely the British Wheel of Yoga and the students of Iyengar. From its founding, the British Wheel of Yoga emphasized both the ultimate goal of union with the divine as well as the myriad of ways individuals in Britain approached yoga. The Wheel in Britain maintained a tireless campaign throughout the 1970s to ensure the spiritual aim of yoga continued to be explicitly taught in the local education authority, preferably under the philosophy rather than physical education department.[61] The Wheel's 1973 *Yoga Handbook* for its teachers stated unambiguously that yoga means "union" and that "this unity is nothing less than that of the Individual Spirit with the Divine Source of Life, that is to say, the unity of the finite with the infinite."[62] The pages of its members' journal were also littered with language of microcosm and macrocosm that typifies the Western esoteric/magical traditions.[63]

While Iyengar Yoga in Britain became a mainstay of physical education departments in the 1970s, seemingly separating the magical from the mundane physical benefits, in Iyengar's mind there was no such distinction. Although the practical approach was different, Iyengar also saw physical postures as means of achieving the ultimate goal of yoga, as *mokṣa* or absorption with the Universal Self.[64] As one British practitioner described Iyengar's approach of creating an experience of *mokṣa* within the physical practice of *āsana*:

> He never warned us or prepared us for special experiences. He simply led us, all unawares, into an altered state of consciousness and then called our attention to it *when we were already there*. . . . my mind had been like a deep pool, unruffled by random thoughts and fancies. If I had the slightest expectation that he was going to lead us into that sort of experience, I would have been so greedy for it that I would have missed it altogether.[65]

Since the 1960s, Iyengar's personal understanding that yoga is a spiritual discipline focused on uniting with the divine has become more explicit.[66] However,

[60] Ibid., 174.

[61] Newcombe (2008, 55–80).

[62] British Wheel of Yoga, *Yoga Handbook* 1973, 2 (unpublished manuscript in the personal collection of Vi Neal-Smith, used for teacher-training in the early 1970s).

[63] Hanegraaff (1999).

[64] Iyengar (1988), 47–49.

[65] Jackson (1978), 145.

[66] Iyengar et al. (2005).

this "ultimate" unity is not necessarily the focus of either modern magical practitioners or modern yoga practitioners and the primary practice remains one of *āsana*. And modern magical practitioners prefer rituals to "somatic meditation" as a method for accessing the divine.

Despite the frequent appeals to medical science to elucidate the mechanisms of exactly how *āsana* practice might improve mental and physical wellbeing,[67] many *āsana* practitioners would also affirm that there is something to the transformative experience of yoga practice that cannot be reduced to biomedical "scientific" mechanisms. If we understand "magic as a practice that tries to effect change based on an individual's will" (and "will" being taken to mean "higher will" related to an individual's feeling of greater meaning and purpose to life) then there are a number of ways that the contemporary practice of yoga can be considered to be magical, even without the practitioners self-identifying their practice as such. Taking a few case studies of a "magical" purpose to modern yoga we will explore the practice of yoga as an elixir of youth, as a method of healing, and for psychological empowerment.

The Elixir of Youth

The practice of sun salutation (*sūryanamaskār*) has become a popular feature in modern yoga practice. Most recently, this has been particularly due to the popularization of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga as taught by Pattabhi Jois.[68] How sun salutation became associated with yoga is a tangled historical web,[69] but the practice was first popularized in Europe during 1936 in a series of articles written by Louise Morgan and based on interviews with the Rajah of Aundh. The Rajah had been popularizing the exercises in his home state since the early 1920s to encourage a healthy and fit population. Elliott Goldberg argues that Morgan's presentation of sun salutation in her series of *News Chronicle* (London) articles and in her ghostwriting of *The Ten-Point Way to Health* (published 1938 in the name of the Rajah of Aundh) places Morgan amongst the most significant influences on the formation of the contemporary modern yoga tradition.[70] Headlines ran: "'Surya Namaskars'—the Secret of Health" and "Rajah's Way to Banish Age and Illness." According to Goldberg, Morgan essentially re-packaged sun salutation as an elixir of youth and beauty for the modern woman. If by simply following these exercises for 15 min a day, "Mothers Look Younger Than Daughters" (another headline), one could be forgiven for thinking something magical was involved. Morgan claims no less than

[67] Alter (2004).

[68] Burger (2006).

[69] See Singleton (2009), 204–206, Goldberg (2006) and Popov forthcoming.

[70] Aundh (1938) and Goldberg (2009).

a transformation of both inner psyche and outer material body in accordance with a woman's will to maintain her youth and beauty.

Morgan's legacy, which placed yoga as particularly a women's elixir of youth and beauty, continued to be a theme in the presentation of yoga to women throughout the twentieth century. Stefanie Syman argues that Indra Devi picked up the theme of youth and beauty above spiritual enlightenment in her presentation of Hatha Yoga to the women of the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Devi was able to muster Hollywood glamour in the faces of Greta Garbo and Gloria Swanson to endorse her *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (published in 1953).[71] While this presentation might appear to be superficial marketing or a "repackaging" of what was once a spiritual tradition, the qualities of youth and beauty can be understood as more profound than aspirations to look like a film star. The qualities of health, youth, and beauty are also states of mind and ways of being in the world, and in these respects the practice of yoga *āsana* can be seen as a magical aid to inner and outer transformation.

In Britain, women were focused on yoga as the key to youth, beauty, and "peace of mind," as yoga entered the local educational authority evening classes.[72] In numerous interviews given to local newspapers during the 1960s and 1970s, female yoga practitioners reinforced middle-class ideas of femininity by claiming that yoga provided a woman with increased vitality, beauty, serenity, and implicitly better health. For example, in 1969 the British author Joan Gold promised that through Hatha Yoga exercises:

> You will radiate good health,
> Your eyes will sparkle,
> Your complexion will glow,
> Your step will regain its youthful spring,
> Your arteries will become elasticized and healthy,
> Your system will be regulated and constipation will disappear,
> Your figure will improve, and your body will become supple,
> You will be able to relax.[73]

Here, traditional marks of a women's beauty are combined with medicalized language of idealized "elasticized arteries" and a regulated and unconstipated system. If these claims were not enough to convince the reader, Gold goes on to explain that "yoga will open the door to the secret of eternal youth—it will reverse the ageing forces of nature."

It is significant also that the idea of yoga as an elixir of immortality is an integral part of the Indian scriptural cannon, with yogic powers allowing for everlasting life.[74] The symbolic language of self-sacrifice, death, and rebirth surrounding the Nath Yoga tradition has parallels to the initiation rituals of Western magic found in

[71] Syman (2010), 179–197.

[72] Newcombe (2007).

[73] Gold (1969), 3.

[74] White (2009), 17–18.

Freemasonry and many other magical traditions.[75] Rather than simply superficial marketing, language of modern postural yoga could be seen as tapping into this archetypal narrative log associated with both Western magic and Indian yoga traditions.

Healing

Healing is a motif that many commentators on contemporary religion have found to be a central theme. Without directly claiming the same efficacy as biomedicine, many significant popularizers of yoga including Selvarajan Yesudian (1916–1998), B. K. S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta (b. 1944), attribute their life and continued health to the practice of yoga.[76] The life stories of these influential teachers have created a kind of archetypal interaction with the yoga space as a type of profoundly healing space, separate from the typical healing expected in the offices of a biomedical physician. While the ability of modern yoga *āsana* to heal in biomedical terms is part of its (modern) foundational myth, a subject also explored by Joseph Alter, some of the effects of yoga experienced as "miraculous healing" also involve a transformation of consciousness towards an experiential transcendence of suffering.[77] All of the 200 *āsanas* described in Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* are accompanied by descriptions of claims for health benefits. Highly influential in its approach, Iyengar's teaching focuses largely on physical instructions; nevertheless, his students testified to profoundly transforming effects on both mind and body. A Franco-British Cambridge resident and student of Iyengar, Janet Downs Tourniere wondered, "How could physical stretches and postures alter the personality as well as the body?"[78]

Many of those who were first attracted to yoga during the 1960s found hope in yoga when conventional biomedical doctors had told them they must learn to live with their pain. For example, yoga teacher Ernest Coates began yoga in part to deal with stress from work and a resulting duodenal ulcer that he did not want operated upon.[79] Likewise, Beatrice Harthan came to yoga partially due to a spinal injury. In 1961, she was photographed doing a forward bend in a swimsuit and was quoted as saying "I've got a damaged spine . . . at the hospital they told me I must just learn to live with it and that I mustn't bend forward. Now I find I can bend any way I like. The pain has lightened and I feel much freer."[80] In the May 1973 issue of *Yoga &*

[75] White (2009).

[76] Iyengar (1987), 3–4 and Yesudian and Haich (1953), 15–18.

[77] Alter (2004).

[78] Tourniere (2002), 129.

[79] Personal interview with Ernst Coates (chairperson of the Friends of Yoga Society International (FRYOG)), 19 December 2004.

[80] Following the Indian newspaper *Today,* 19 August 1961.

Health, an article reported that Swami Satyananda (a disciple of Sivananda) cured "people who have been suffering from drug addiction, depression, and many other mental afflictions" with what he called Kriya Yoga.[81] Instead of accepting a surgical supporting belt for spondylolisthesis, another person turned to yoga and claimed that yoga kept her back "free from pain."[82] For those experiencing release from pain where biomedical authority had prophesized a lifetime of suffering, many perceived a 'magical' quality in yoga's efficacy.

The significance of healing that many practitioners attribute to yoga also can have a magical quality. Following the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's typology, Elizabeth De Michelis has described a prototypical structure of a yoga class as a "healing ritual" in three stages: (1) a period of arrival and quieting (preliminal), (2) postural and breathing practice (liminal state), and (3) final relaxation (incorporation or postliminal).[83] Verena Schnäbele likewise emphasizes that modern yoga classes are "very much ritualized" and create "room for experiences within a fixed sequence of actions repeated many times."[84] Exactly what this healing space may entail is further elucidated by the self-reflections of Catherine Garrett who commented that although practicing yoga did not reduce her pain due to a medical condition, it did reduce the suffering that the pain caused. Garrett spoke of the ability of yoga (as well as Reiki and Transcendental Meditation) to evoke a self-transformation, where pain perhaps is not avoided, but suffering transcended.[85] Garrett goes on to argue that yoga, Reiki, and Transcendental Meditation all contain "magical elements" within their use of ritual frameworks for healing. She defines magic as "the art of creating effects thought to be beyond natural human power."[86]

Healing is also important to the magical and pagan traditions. Vivienne Crowley describes Wiccan healing as taking place through four main practices: Western herbalism and psychotherapy (which she asserts are non-magical) and the practices of manipulating "etheric energy" and spell craft.[87] Theories of etheric energy might owe something to the subtle bodies of the Indian descriptions of physical and subtle aspects of the body, the *pañca kośa* which are actively discussed in some yoga traditions, e.g. Sivananda-based yoga traditions, but de-emphasized in many others.[88] The Wiccan practice of spell craft involves concentration, visualization, and meditation. Like with modern yoga, some of the healing effects of these methods perhaps could be justified by modern science. Yet it remains the case

[81] *Yoga & Health*, 16 May 1973. For more on Satyananda's tradition see Satyananda (2008).
[82] *Yoga Biomedical Trust Newsletter*, May 1991.
[83] De Michelis (2004), 248–260.
[84] Schnäbele (2010), 113.
[85] Garrett (2001).
[86] Garrett (2001), 335.
[87] Crowley (2003), 152.
[88] Strauss (2002, 2005).

that most forms of contemporary postural yoga are much more focused on healing the physical body than many magical traditions.[89]

Empowerment

Ethnographic work by Klas Nevrin and Benjamin Richard Smith emphasize the role of self-transformation and practitioner empowerment as a motivation for the contemporary practice of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga. Smith claims that through daily practice mental, psychological, and spiritual transformations are effected.[90] Likewise Nevrin has delineated the various ways that an Asthanga Vinyasa Yoga can cause the practitioner to feel existentially and socially empowered, feeling more "whole," "alive" and self-confident.[91] When yoga entered the British local educational authority evening class structure in the 1960s, it can be argued that its appeal to women partially stemmed from how it valued women's embodied subjective experiences, in a similar way to that discussed by Nevrin and Smith. I have argued elsewhere how this made yoga a complement to the "natural birth movement" and aspects of second wave feminism in the 1970s.[92] Additionally, many responses to a 2002 survey of Iyengar Yoga practitioners in Britain revealed that the largely physical practice of yoga was "adding a sense of meaning to life" for 85 % of respondents. Elaborations on this theme described yoga as "grounding" and bringing "purpose" and "sanity"; this could be rephrased as empowerment to "cope with the ups and downs of life."[93] This feeling of empowerment is a transformation of the "internal consciousness" of the operator, according to our working understanding of magic. Its effects are powerful and can lead to real changes in the external world as experienced by a practitioner.

It might be accurate to say that most of those in the contemporary occult and magical milieus give little attention to physical fitness,[94] yet the ability to transcend the body and focus the mind remains a central element of their practices. In this, modern magicians are repeating the original descriptions found within Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* in seeking absolute concentration without the distractions of pain and discomfort within the physical body. Some members of the OTO do practice modern yoga as a personal lifestyle choice and there is a recent book encouraging magickal practitioners to take up the practice as an aid to magickal efficacy, i.e. Nancy Wasserman's *Yoga for Magic: Build Physical and Mental Strength for*

[89] Wasserman (2007), 12.
[90] Smith (2004), 8.
[91] Nevrin (2008).
[92] Newcombe (2007).
[93] Hasselle-Newcombe (2005), 311–312.
[94] Wasserman (2007), 12.

your Practice.[95] Many of those in magical orders influenced by Crowley are well versed in his literature relating to yoga and interested in the effects on energy that various yoga positions hold. In these aspects, yoga is used as a tool to further magickal empowerments, both personal and super-personal.[96] While the subtle body is de-emphasized in most modern postural practice, an understanding of manipulating somatic energy remains central to the teaching of Iyengar Yoga and underlies many other traditions; the Sivananda lineages tend to discuss the various subtle bodies directly. For those in the modern yoga milieus (perhaps more than those in magickal orders), "self-empowerment" also has its limits. Nevrin also discusses the limitations of "how yoga can change a person," largely through the absence of discussion on social and ethical constraints in the power structures and living conditions of the modern world.[97]

Conclusion

In modern yoga the focus on the physical body, its health, and wellbeing, is a far cry from more typical associations with magic, and contemporary yoga practitioners are very unlikely to consider their practice to be "magical." Nevertheless, in the twentieth century there were significant overlaps between the social networks of Western magicians and what has become the modern yoga tradition. Additionally, I have argued that the spectrum of yoga practitioners and ways of practicing contain a self-transformative element that is similar in both modern yoga and contemporary magical practice. To some extent, the magic of yoga could be understood as an everyday sort of magic. The means of yoga are quite mundane—they don't require magic wands, circles, extensive use of symbolism, or being "sky-clad" (naked) for a symbolic rebirth. Although not normally associated with "magic," the modern yoga practitioner often has a "ritual space" that is cleared from clutter, a yoga mat, and perhaps some other "props" like blankets or blocks to assist their practice. Both yoga and ritual magic traditions use structures of time and space to effect change within an individual. Both traditions have a focus on attaining greater mental control and powers of concentration. Practitioners of both traditions report that their practice "works" in bringing about positive and desired changes to their lives, both in finding it easier to "cope" with life in general, and in offering specific examples of change or healing in their personal lives. Both practices are actively used for a kind of cultivation of (a higher) self (largely as defined by the individual practitioner). At the level of ultimate meaning, both traditions aim for an experience of the underlying nature of reality. For both yoga and magical practitioners, an

[95] Wasserman (2007).

[96] Personal correspondence with Ken Rees, 20 November 2009.

[97] Nevrin (2008).

experience of lesser separation between individual "microcosm" and the rest of the universe "macrocosm" could be considered an experiential goal.

However, when exploring these parallels it is also important to reflect upon the vast diversity of both the contemporary magical milieu and the practice of modern yoga. Pagan and yoga groups have various levels in their degree of openness and access to esoteric knowledge. Some groups present their entire ritual practice to all, while others open esoteric rituals only to those who have participated in certain initiation ceremonies (or teacher-training qualifications in the case of yoga practitioners).

The practice of contemporary magic in esoteric or pagan circles looks very different from modern yoga practice, but the aims and methods do betray a Wittgensteinian family resemblance, even if magic could be described as yoga's disinherited family member. The contemporary pagan scene has had active engagement with critical historiographies and open practitioner scholars for slightly longer than has been the case in the modern yoga milieu. One of the effects of this engagement has been a significant acceptance of the extent to which the occult, and particularly Wicca, can be considered an "invented tradition."[98] In particular Gerald Gardner, the founder of Wicca, claimed to have been initiated into a secret order of witches which had continuity with the middle ages. In a seminal work *The Triumph of the Moon* the historian Ronald Hutton has shown that there is little, if any, evidence for a continuity of tradition before Gardner.[99] The effect this has had upon modern pagans has been called by Helen Cornish the "Huttonisation" of paganism, noting that there have been a wide variety of responses and reactions to the challenges Hutton posed to the historical foundations of Wicca. Some practitioners feel frustrated and undermined by the authority of historical, textual based research in their justification for practice, and feel under pressure to maintain a "coherent and plausible narrative." However, the emphasis for many contemporary practitioners of witchcraft is on "what works" and draws on a variety of psychologically potent myths, dreams, archetypes, intuitions and experiences, as well as the natural landscape and occult ritual.[100] From this perspective, the mythical origins of magic are equally as effective as myths, without needing to be understood as historical fact.

The revision of the history of yoga has only more recently been underway, with seminal works including those by Alter, De Michelis, and Singleton as well as a number of other scholars.[101] While the majority of yoga practitioners might justify their yoga practice by the similarly pragmatic "it works," it is still easy to find references in popular culture and amongst practitioners of yoga as being part of a

[98] Hobsbawm (1983).
[99] Hutton (1999).
[100] Cornish (2009).
[101] Newcombe (2009).

continuous "5,000 year old" (or more!) tradition.[102] It will be interesting to observe to what extent the academic study of yoga affects the self-understanding of contemporary yoga practitioners. This may place some modern yoga practitioners in an awkward position between the revealed "truth" of a living guru and the historical "truths" presented by scholarship. This dissonance could cause the "magical" yoga's powers of healing and empowerment to become less effective for some practitioners. But the continuing strength of modern paganism and persistence of occult practices has shown that magic does not necessarily need a historically true creation myth in order to be effective, and that powerful transformations can be effected even with a critical self-awareness of the tradition's history. Although it is interesting to speculate on such matters, it is most likely that the majority of yoga practitioners will continue their weekly classes without much awareness of either ancient truth claims or the more modern origins of their practices. Nevertheless, yoga practitioners will return to their mats week after week for the same reasons they have for the last 50 years; the experience makes them feel better, although they might not be quite sure what exactly causes this effect. Is it magic?

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[102] For example, Prince of Wales Foundation for Integrated Health 2010. Yoga Therapy. http://www.fih.org.uk/information_library/complementary_healthcare_a_guide/overview_of_the_main_complementary_therapies/yoga_therapy.html. Accessed 30 May 2010.

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The Impact of Kundalini Yoga on Concepts and Diagnostic Practice in Psychology and Psychotherapy

Liane Hofmann

Abstract The teachings and practices of the Eastern spiritual and contemplative traditions have witnessed an enormous rise in popularity in Western society since the early 1980s at latest, and also been steadily propagated among the general public. Parallel to this, what is known as "spiritual crises" or "spiritual emergencies" have increasingly become the object of attention of the psychotherapeutic profession. The present article focuses on the way psychology throughout its history has studied and reflected on the intended goal of Kundalini Yoga, the so-called "*kuṇḍalinī* awakening," and its influence on the current conceptualization and diagnosis of such spiritual crises. This example will be used to illustrate the input that psychology, and in particular its practical applications in psychotherapy and psycho-diagnostics, have received from culture-bound concepts and practices. The example of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening is a fine case in point for outlining the specific challenges and adaption processes, as well as some of the major developments in psychology, psychotherapy, and psycho-diagnostics that have recently emerged in response to the need to show greater consideration towards world views and culture-specific patterns of interpretation in the psychotherapeutic context, and as a result of the transcultural encounter of health- and development-related concepts and methodologies.

Introduction

With the increasing spread of psycho-spiritual practices in Western societies, a growing incidence of specific, clinically-relevant problems have come to be reported, which have been conceived of as "spiritual emergencies," "transformational crises," or "transpersonal disorders" by some exponents of transpersonal psychology. In this respect it has been pointed out that there is a need for extended

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developmental psychological and psycho-diagnostic conceptualizations, as well as for more appropriate avenues of treatment. Over the years, this has led to a lively theoretical debate as well as an increase in research activities, which by now have produced initial results in the fields of psychological modeling, psychotherapeutic practice, and also psycho-diagnostics.[1] In this article, the so-called Kundalini syndrome, which experts in the field consider to be the most prevalent type of spiritual emergency, will be taken as a case in point to delineate the specific challenges and problems which the profession of psychology and psychotherapists in particular have had to face due to the import of practices, concepts, and world views from Asian spiritual traditions. This article will look at the history of psychology and undertake an analysis of the transcultural flows between the Indian Kundalini Yoga traditions and the proponents of modern, scientific psychology and psychotherapy from Europe and North America.[2] The focus will be directed at the developments arising from these encounters that have a bearing on psychotherapy and psycho-diagnostics.

To begin with, the concept of the ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī* (Skt.), as described in the Indian scriptures, will be briefly sketched. This will be followed by a closer look at some of the major historical stations and protagonists who played a part in the East–West transfers of the bodies of knowledge and the practices connected with Kundalini Yoga, on the one hand, and the characteristically Western disciplines of psychology and psychotherapy, on the other hand. More specifically, the protagonists include John Woodroffe, Carl Gustav Jung, Gopi Krishna, and Swami Muktananda. Clearly other people and organizations have been important in spreading the ideas and practices associated with the Indian concept of *kuṇḍalinī* in the West, and deserve attention as independent and complex socio-historical phenomena and as transcultural facilitators. The first to be mentioned here are the Theosophical Society, Yogi Bhajan and the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization, as well as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. But since their influence has been on more or less broad currents of society and less specifically on the academic discipline of psychology, a detailed discussion of their contributions would go beyond the scope of the present paper.

In a further step I shall comment on the concept of "spiritual emergency" as well as on some of the central objectives and models of transpersonal psychology that evolved from the late 1960s onward, and which are significant in our context. Among other things, this also includes some deliberations on the basic problems that arise when trying to classify such phenomena within Western culture and its popular psychological models. This will be followed by a section that will look at the clinical aspects and the relevant psycho-diagnostics. More specifically, this will consist of a brief phenomenological outline of the Kundalini syndrome and its

[1] Galuska (2003), Grof and Grof (1989, 1990), Hofmann (2009), Lukoff et al. (1998), Nelson (1994), Scharfetter (1991), and Wilber et al. (1986).

[2] The term "Kundalini Yoga traditions" in the present article encompasses all the Indian spiritual traditions in which a central part is played by a systematic approach to the *kuṇḍalinī* energy and its awakening with the aim of transforming consciousness.

clinical symptoms, along with its most frequent triggers, as well as an exemplary case study. Furthermore, the current possibilities for a psycho-diagnostic classification of *kuṇḍalinī*-type experiences will be presented and discussed. To conclude, the article will present some basic reflections on the implications of the current growth in transculturality and their consequences for psychotherapy, as well as a critical evaluation of the developments that have been presented.

The Concept of Awakening *Kuṇḍalinī*

The term Kundalini Yoga refers to psychophysical techniques associated with the Tantric yoga tradition originating in India. The most meticulous expositions on *kuṇḍalinī* and its awakening are to be found in the Tantric texts and in the historical treatises dealing with *haṭhayoga*.[3] This form of yoga is based on the assumption of a subtle energy system with *prāṇa* (vital force, life energy), chakras (Skt: *cakra*, energy centre, centre of consciousness, literally: wheel), and several *nāḍī* (energy channel, conduit, literally: pipe). This system is said to form the basis of all life and mental processes, and the deliberate manipulation of this energy is supposed to bring about a fundamental transformation of consciousness. The concept of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* (from *śak*, "to be able," "empowered"; *kuṇḍal*, literally: coiled) refers to a spiritual, cosmic energy that is purported to reside at the base of the spine. It is regarded as a manifestation of the macrocosmic energy *mahāśakti* in the microcosmic dimensions of the human body. The image that is used is of a sleeping serpent resting at the base of the spine in the lowermost chakra, coiled so that its mouth seals the central channel (*suṣumnānāḍī*) that ascends up through the spinal column. Kundalini Yoga aims to rouse this spiritual force by means of spiritual practices: The *kuṇḍalinī* energy is then supposed to rise up the *suṣumnānāḍī* and to open or in fact awaken the individual chakras in a process known as *ṣaṭ cakra bheda,* the penetration of the chakras. This opening of the individual chakras is accompanied, so it is said, by specific experiences and paranormal faculties (Skt. *siddhi*). The goal of the process is the arrival of the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* at the "seventh chakra" (*sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus)—the abode of Shiva, of pure formless consciousness —and the union with this. For the yogi this means experiencing the merging of personal consciousness (*jīvātma*) with universal consciousness (*paramātman*), and thus the dissolution of duality in the state of *samādhi*. On reaching this goal, the yogi is considered to have attained *jīvanmukti*—liberation while still living. The liberation that is achieved by Kundalini Yoga is regarded in this tradition as a superior form because the central power of the body is awakened and the body is included in the process of transformation. But time and again the traditional texts contain words of warning that this path of consciousness transformation contains risks, and demands the appropriate instruction, preparation, and setting.[4]

[3] Feuerstein (1990).

[4] Chatterjee (2010), Feuerstein (1990), Pandit (1971), and Woodroffe (1964).

Proceeding from the fact, that the *kuṇḍalinī* experience is claimed to be based on universal structures of the body, Feuerstein suggests that this force has been experienced by mystics throughout the ages.[5] However, only the Tantric writings have conceptualized this mysterious psycho-spiritual force in such a comprehensive and differentiated manner and have elaborated practical guidelines for the spiritual practitioner.[6] The assumption that the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon is a universal process of psycho-spiritual transformation that transcends cultural borders, but which has led to various forms of specific, culturally-coded interpretations and practices, can be found throughout the literature.[7]

John Woodroffe and Carl Gustav Jung

The concept of *kuṇḍalinī* first came to the notice of the West through the life work of John Woodroffe and his translations of and commentaries on Tantric works, the most influential being *The Serpent Power* published in 1918. Woodroffe was born in England in 1865. He lived and worked in India for over 30 years, initially as a high court judge in Calcutta. Woodroffe published under the pen name "Arthur Avalon." As Kathleen Taylor has shown, this pseudonym subsumed a group of authors consisting not only of John Woodroffe, but also of a number of Bengali mentors.[8] Woodroffe became a recognized authority in the fields of Tantrism and Shaktism. According to Newcombe, his translations of the Tantric texts influenced the understanding of yoga throughout the entire twentieth century.[9] In *The Serpent Power*, Woodroffe translated and commented on two Tantric texts (*Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* and the *Pādukāpañcaka)* in which the power of *kuṇḍalinī* (*kuṇḍalinī śaktī*) is mentioned. For many Westerners, including Carl Gustav Jung, this work marked their entry into the mysterious, complex, and fascinating world of Tantrism and Kundalini Yoga.

The translation and dissemination of the first yoga texts in the Western world occurred at roughly the same time as the ascent of depth psychology.[10] According to Shamdasani, this presented a new and highly promising yardstick for comparing "Western" and "Eastern" bodies of thought. As he writes: the newly developing depth psychologies

> thought to develop maps of inner experience grounded in the transformative potential of therapeutic practices. A similar alignment of "theory" and "practice" seemed to be

[5] Feuerstein (1990, 189).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Greenwell (1990), Grof and Grof (1989, 1990), Krishna (1972), Madert (2007), Reinelt (2006), and Sanella (1987).

[8] Taylor (2001).

[9] Newcombe (2009, 990).

[10] Shamdasani (1996a).

> embodied in the yogic texts ... Hence an opportunity for a new form of comparative psychology opened up.[11]

Likewise Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, began very early to develop an interest in the Asian traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism and to regard these among others as a culture-specific form of psychology. He attached great importance to the understanding and study of Eastern thought for the development and perfection of scientific psychology. As he wrote: "The knowledge of Eastern psychology namely forms the indispensable basis for a critique and an objective consideration of Western psychology."[12] Jung's own understanding of yoga was that of a natural process of introversion. He saw significant parallels between his own analytical psychology and yoga—especially Kundalini Yoga, Tantric Yoga, Lamaism, and Taoist Yoga. For Jung, these texts were a rich source of symbolic representations of inner experiences which had a special bearing on the interpretation of the collective unconscious and the understanding of the process of individuation.[13] Accordingly, Jung was presumably the first renowned psychologist in the Western hemisphere to examine the topic of *kuṇḍalinī* in depth. In this way he contributed like no other to the growing reception of the corresponding world views and bodies of knowledge within the discipline of psychology.

In 1930 and 1931 Jung gave his first lectures on Kundalini Yoga and the symbolism of the chakras. However, his involvement in the topic of *kuṇḍalinī* was mainly brought to notice by his seminar on Kundalini Yoga in 1932 at the Psychological Club in Zurich, in cooperation with the Indologist Wilhelm Hauer. In this lecture, Jung tried to give a modern psychological interpretation of the chakras on the basis of John Woodroffe's work *The Serpent Power*. The Indologist Hauer provided a philological and historical account, which served as the basis for Jung's psychological interpretations of the material.[14] The historian of psychology, Sonu Shamdasani, has noted that the presentation the audience received of Kundalini Yoga thus passed through three filters: firstly through John Woodroffe's translations and commentaries, second through Hauer's accounts, and finally through Jung—so it is little surprise that "the three were often at variance, both in their terminology and in their understanding of the processes involved."[15]

One of the factors that contributed to Jung's growing interest in Kundalini Yoga was that a client of his, a European who had spent her childhood in Java, reported having dreams which at first baffled him. Only after Jung had read *The Serpent Power* did the woman's dreams begin to make sense to him. From then on he believed that the symbolism of Kundalini Yoga suggested that the curious visions and dreams which his clients sometimes reported could be attributed to the

[11] Shamdasani (1996a, xix).

[12] Jung, cited in Shamdasani (1996a, xivi).

[13] Jung (1958, 537) and Shamdasani (1996a).

[14] Shamdasani (1996a).

[15] Shamdassani (1996a, xl).

awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*.[16] With this, he was arguably the first renowned proponent of modern psychology to equate the interpretational scheme of *kuṇḍalinī* with complex and at times difficult psychological processes in individuals from Western societies.

An exhaustive critical evaluation of Jung's studies of Kundalini Yoga would exceed the scope of this article.[17] In retrospect it may be said that Jung's psychological interpretations of Kundalini Yoga, irrespective of the fundamental esteem that has been shown towards this work, has also undergone considerable criticism.[18] A frequently raised objection is that Jung reinterpreted the terms and concepts related to Kundalini Yoga solely in line with his own conceptual framework of analytical psychology, in particular with the process of individuation, so as to buttress his own theoretical edifice, but without doing proper justice to the indigenous understanding of these ideas. Especially in his understanding of the highest two chakras and their implications he seems to diverge from the patterns of interpretation and the evaluations found in their context of origin.[19] Harold Coward summarized criticism of this kind as follows:

> Jung's reinterpretation of Kuṇḍalinī Yoga in terms of his own psychological theory is an exceptional tour de force … However with today's much better knowledge of Eastern thought, it is doubtful that Jung's "rope trick" of standing Kuṇḍalinī Yoga on its head and then lopping off the last two *chakras* as "superfluous speculations with no practical value" would be accepted. What Jung's "Commentary" accomplished then, and still does today, is to provide added insight into *his* understanding of the *process of individuation*, not an accurate description of Kuṇḍalinī.[20]

Coward sees the merit of Jung's interpretation of Kundalini Yoga as lying chiefly in the deeper understanding of the individuation process it contributed to, and in its teasing out of several key points of similarity and differences between Western and Eastern ways of thinking.[21] Shamdasani aptly concludes with respect to this debate: "However, the problems that confront Jung's interpretations at a more general level apply to other attempts to translate the terms of Kundalini yoga into modern concepts. In the course of such attempts the terms became hybridized, and the resultant blend is no longer distinctly 'Eastern' or 'Western'."[22]

Jung distinguished himself with his highly complex and at times seemingly ambivalent approach to the Indian teachings of yoga. Although he showed great respect for the profundity of "Eastern thought," and stressed how crucial it was to

[16] Shamdasani (1996a, xxvi) and Jung (1996).

[17] The reader is referred to the finely nuanced analyses by Coward (1985), Schwery (1988), and Shamdasani (1996a).

[18] Coward (1985), Hauer (1983), Krishna (1988), Madert (2007), Schwery (1988), and Shamdasani (1996a).

[19] Jung (1996 (1932), 57).

[20] Coward (1985, 123).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Shamdasani (1996a, xlvi).

study it in order to gain a complete picture of human psychology, he was at the same time always highly critical when it came to an unquestioning acceptance of foreign developmental concepts and ideas and their application to Western acculturated people. He also warned Europeans from practicing these teachings uncritically.[23] Jung wrote for instance in a letter to his pupil Oskar Schmitz with reference to the comparison between the psychoanalytical method—as a means of self-improvement—and yoga:

> It appears to me, however, as one must emphasize, that it is merely an analogy which is involved, since nowadays far too many Europeans are inclined to carry Eastern ideas and methods over unexamined into our occidental mentality. This happens, in my opinion, neither to our advantage nor to the advantage of those ideas.[24]

Jung's argument was that although the introversion processes themselves are of a universal nature, culturally specific methods for facilitating them had been developed over long periods of time down the millennia. And he assumed that the methods of yoga did not suit the specific historical and cultural situation and the psychological structure of Europeans. Rather, his position was that, over the centuries, Western society would develop its own appropriate form of yoga, which would have to be done on the basis of Christian culture.[25] In this respect he pointed out that methods that were analogous to yoga and suited Europeans had, indeed, already been developed in the Western hemisphere, for instance the religious exercises of the church or the newly developing methods of psychotherapy. Of particular importance to Jung in this context was that European society was marked by a very specific factor—by which he meant the great divide between science and religion that had already begun in the fifteenth century. Colored by this historical split in the "Western mind," as Jung saw it, the members of "Western civilization" were subject to an extreme conflict between "religious and scientific truth," "between faith and knowledge."[26] This specifically European frame of mind created in Jung's view fundamental difficulties for a holistic approach to grasping the universe, such as yoga has. And it was precisely this he felt was the reason for yoga's popularity—for here "a religious method recommends itself at the same time as 'scientific'."[27] Jung was of the opinion that from a psychological perspective, neither knowledge nor faith alone were sufficient.

This skepticism towards the use of yoga methods for the European was, however, not restricted to Jung, but was part of the general zeitgeist. Many of Jung's scientifically trained contemporaries who wrote on yoga were similarly critical about adopting yoga teachings and practicing them in the "West." The question was constantly raised as to whether yoga was suitable for people steeped in European

[23] Jung (1958), Schwery (1988), and Shamdasani (1996b).

[24] Jung, cited in Shamdasani (1996a, xxi).

[25] Jung (1958 (1936), 537) and Shamdasani (1996a).

[26] Jung (1958 (1936), 532).

[27] Jung 1958 (1936), ibid.

culture, or indeed for the "European organism."[28] Already at that time the question was also of whether yoga could be effectively employed in any way for Western people and if so, which of its elements.

Gopi Krishna

Another person who was a great driving force behind popularizing the idea of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening in Europe and America was Gopi Krishna (1903–1984). Krishna was born in 1903 in Srinagar, Kashmir. He worked as an administrative official at the Ministry of Education. In 1937, after long years of meditative practice, he experienced at the age of 34 something that he conceived of as the ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī* energy. This initiated an intensive and extremely challenging 12-year-long psycho-physiological process. Krishna describes this process in his autobiography *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* in which he provides the most comprehensive and most detailed case report of a *kuṇḍalinī*-type experience to this day.[29] Krishna's autobiography was first published in India in 1967. This was followed shortly after by further editions in Great Britain and the United States. Since then the book has been translated into eleven languages.[30] Gopi Krishna's personal "*kuṇḍalinī* experience" became the starting point of an intensive, lifelong quest for a systematic understanding of the underlying mechanisms and causes. Above all he was interested in the physiological basis of the *kuṇḍalinī* process. In his opinion, the phenomenon that the ancient Indian texts referred to as *kuṇḍalinī* awakening was a universal process not restricted to any one culture and underpinned the evolution of consciousness. This process, as Krishna believed, is as responsible for the development of creativity and genius as it is for religious and mystical experiences or, in the case of an aberrant development, even for certain forms of mental disorder.[31] Krishna was also convinced that this process must have an empirically demonstrable physiological basis.

Krishna made numerous journeys to Europe and North America and spent large parts of his life championing a scientific examination of the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon. Above all, his exchanges with the renowned German physicist and philosopher Carl-Friedrich von Weizäcker towards the end of the 1960s further contributed to Gopi Krishna's recognition and the awareness of the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon in enlightened intellectual circles of the Western world. The encounter with von Weizäcker was reflected in Gopi Krishna's work *The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius*, for which von Weizäcker wrote a lengthy introduction. Although von Weizäcker clearly recognized the shortcomings in the way that autodidact Gopi Krishna made use of science to analyze and present the phenomenon, and stated as

[28] Keyserling, cited in Shamdasani (1996a, xxx).

[29] Krishna (1967).

[30] See http://www.icrcanada.org/gopikrishna.html (accessed 21 September 2010).

[31] Ibid.

much, the physicist felt that Krishna's experience and its implications were of such potential importance that he published the work in the series he edited together with Karl Friedrich von Basedow for the *Forschungsgesellschaft für östliche Weisheit und westliche Wissenschaft* (Research Association for Eastern Wisdom and Western Science). In his detailed introduction von Weizäcker wrote on his own concerns in this matter:

> The problem arising here is that ...[Gopi Krishna's] knowledge of European intellectual concepts and of modern science is autodidactic. He does not always clearly distinguish between the customary academic classification of a scientific doctrine and its more subtle meanings. He is therefore not always a competent analyst, but he is something far more important: he is an eyewitness to the truth he represents. ... Those who know Western science are aware that it tends to confront almost exclusively only those problems for which it is theoretically prepared, at least in terms of the conceptual framework of the problem. What follows is intended to assist in such preparation.[32]

Among other points, von Weizäcker notes in his introduction that concepts such as *prāṇa* or *kuṇḍalinī* pose considerable problems for Western natural sciences because, ever since Descartes, they have rested on the methodological foundations of the Cartesian split between consciousness and matter. Accordingly, concepts such as *prāṇa* or *kuṇḍalinī* have to be assigned either to the physical or to the mental realm. He then conjectured however that further insights might be gained from the newly developing field of quantum physics.[33]

Swami Muktananda

The contribution that Swami Muktananda Paramhamsa (1908–1982) made to introducing the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* to the minds and, above all, to the experiences of Western spiritual seekers, and also to its ever-increasing dissemination, was probably unmatched by any other spiritual teacher from the Indian subcontinent. The concept of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* and its awakening is regarded as one of the main intellectual pillars in a spiritual tradition known as Siddha Yoga, which draws on Kashmiri Shivaism and its foremost texts, the *Śivasūtra*.[34] According to this teaching, the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* is induced by means of "shaktipat"-initiation (from *śakti*—"power," and *pāt*—"descent"). Here the term "shaktipat" refers to the transmission of spiritual energy from a realized guru (*siddha*), whose *kuṇḍalinī* has already risen, to the disciple. In this way, so it is assumed, the disciple's dormant *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened and the spiritual process set in motion. Similarly, the further conducting of the process is said to occur above all on a subtle plane by means of

[32] Weizäcker von (1972, 5 and 22).

[33] Weizäcker von (1972).

[34] Angelé (1994), Reinelt (2006), and Schwery (1988).

the guru's *śakti*. Central to this practice is devotion and orientation to the guru, and less so the performance of specific yogic methods.

The headquarters of the gurus in the Siddha Yoga tradition and of the Siddha Foundation set up in 1975 is an ashram in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Already in the late 1960s, a large number of wealthy Indian and an increasing number of American devotees were drawn to Swami Muktananda's ashram. They were partly responsible for the first wave of Muktananda's teaching spreading beyond the bounds of his immediate surroundings. A major step in Muktananda's growing fame in the West came when he began traveling to Europe, Singapore, Australia, and the United States. His journey in 1970—sponsored by the New York art dealer Albert Rudolph—was accompanied by the US American psychologist Richard Alpert.[35] Alpert had undertaken experiments with psychedelic substances in the 1960s at Harvard together with Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Allen Ginsberg, and later became known as a spiritual teacher in his own right under the name of Ram Dass.[36] During this journey to the United States, Muktananda signed a contract with Harper and Row for his autobiography, *Guru*, which later appeared in further editions under the title *Play of Consciousness*. Muktananda's first transcontinental journey led in turn to ever-growing throngs of Westerners traveling to his Indian Ashram. In 1974 Swami Muktananda took up an invitation from these followers and set out on another world tour. This time he spent all of two and a half years in the United States and gave many lectures. Among other addresses he reputedly spoke before 500 psychologists and psychotherapists at a convention in San Diego.[37] During this time Muktananda developed a special practice designed to fit the life world of his Western followers—the so-called "intensive." An intensive consisted of a mixture of meditation, chanting, study of scriptures, and the recitation of mantras, which lasted over 24 h and even as long as several days. The climax of these intensives was the aforementioned "shaktipat"-initiation, which was supposed to awaken the disciple's *kuṇḍalinī*. In later years this "shaktipat" transmissions were also performed by Muktananda's personally authorized disciples.[38] By the late seventies and early eighties, Muktananda had also initiated a number of Western followers as swamis—the majority of whom came from the United States. What is remarkable about this is that, according to Angelé, the majority had academic backgrounds and included professors, doctors, art critics, computer scientists, journalists, and psychologists.[39] In the broader circles around Muktananda, in not only the United States and Europe, but also his ashram in Ganeshpuri, numerous Westerners experienced the psycho-physical effects of these "shaktipat" transmissions firsthand. Impressive descriptions of

[35] Angelé (1994).

[36] http://www.ramdass.org/biography, (accessed 10 June 2010); Angelé (1994).

[37] Angelé (1994) and Melton (2001).

[38] Angelé (1994), see also Reinelt (2006, 20).

[39] Angelé (1994, 12).

such experiences can be found not only in the autobiographical literature, but also in scientific reports on the subject.[40]

Swami Muktananda also had closer contact with a number of renowned exponents of transpersonal psychology, such as Stanislav Grof, Richard Alpert, and Claudio Naranjo.[41] These resulted among other things in a conference in 1982 organized in Bombay by the International Transpersonal Association in collaboration with the Siddha Yoga Foundation, entitled "Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science." According to Grof et al., the conference focused on "bringing together spiritual teachers and new paradigm scientists to show the convergence of worldviews."[42] According to the authors' report, over 700 people took part.

The Rise of Transpersonal Psychology and the Concept of Spiritual Emergency

A further crucial point in our story is marked by the development of transpersonal psychology, which emerged in the late 1960s from humanistic psychology as the so-called fourth force of the hitherto established psychotherapeutic schools.[43] The transpersonal school took its name from the fact that it chiefly dealt with what are termed "transpersonal" experiences. "Transpersonal" can best be understood in the literal sense—as going beyond the individual person.[44] This refers to experiences in which the sense of identity extends beyond the usual boundaries of the personality.[45] From its very beginnings, transpersonal psychology was strongly influenced by the contemplative traditions of Asia. Based on their approach to the human psyche, exponents of transpersonal psychology viewed the most influential psychotherapeutic schools of the time—behaviorism and psychoanalysis—as reductionist and too focused on psychopathology. By contrast, transpersonal psychology wanted to focus on the potential for human growth and on the so-called "farther reaches of human nature,"[46] and thereby also include the spiritual dimension of human nature in its theoretical models as well as research. Renowned representatives of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy include Roger Walsh, Frances Vaughan, Charles Tart, Stanislav Grof, Ken Wilber, Abraham Maslow, and, in the European field, Roberto Assagioli and Karlfried Graf Dürckheim. Jung is also seen as a forerunner of transpersonal psychology. He was nominated as such posthumously

[40] Jones (1973), Muktananda (1971), Reinelt (2006), see also Ossoff (1993).

[41] http://www.nityanandatradition.org/lineage/muktananda-associates.html (accessed 6 October 2010).

[42] Grof et al. (2008, 56).

[43] Maslow (1968) and Suttich (1969).

[44] Vaughan (1982).

[45] Walsh (1992).

[46] Maslow (1971).

because he was one of the first Western psychologists who explicitly included the religious dimension of human experience in the framework of his analytical psychotherapy. As we have seen, Jung also distinguished between an individual or personal dimension of the unconscious, and a collective dimension that extends beyond cultural boundaries. He was also one of the first to use the term "transpersonal" in a systematic way to point out this specific feature of the collective unconscious of transcending the personal realm.[47]

Among the central concepts originating in transpersonal psychology were several extended models of psychological development that followed the world's contemplative traditions, mainly Eastern spiritual traditions. These models postulated that beyond the conventional, personal stages of development into a mature adult with an integrated personality, there is the possibility of a further development towards transpersonal stages of growth. These stages peak in a final state which, among others, is described in Eastern traditions in terms such as "enlightenment," "liberation," and "realization of the Buddha nature."[48] This was new territory for the discipline of psychology, because up till then the focus of conventional psychology and psychotherapy had been on early childhood, pre-personal development up to the personal stages of development towards a mature adult personality, and the attendant developmental pathologies and their treatment, and because it had barely been concerned with the cultivation of altered or higher states of consciousness. The perfect complement to all this appeared to be the spiritual traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, which were also discussed in the relevant literature as "Asian psychologies" or "consciousness disciplines."[49] These had chiefly concerned themselves with the existential and transpersonal levels of human development and drawn up detailed maps of transpersonal states of consciousness. They also developed methods designed to induce and stabilize such states. In contrast, in these systems little knowledge can be found of the early phases of development from birth to adulthood and their possible disorders.[50]

A further point to mention in this connection is that, along with the ongoing spread of psycho-spiritual practices in the 1970s and 1980s in Western societies, psychotherapeutic practitioners saw themselves increasingly confronted with specific, psychotherapeutically relevant problems that were difficult to classify according to the established psychological models and diagnostic schemata. Proponents of transpersonal psychology conceptualized these kinds of phenomena as "spiritual emergencies," "transpersonal pathologies," or "transformational crises." Associated with this was a growing criticism of the various approaches and concepts that the psychological and psychiatric mainstream had to offer in this context: The representatives of these disciplines were accused of a lack of specific expertise, of inappropriately pathologizing such experiences, of suppressing their

[47] Walach et al. (2005).

[48] Wilber (1986a, b, c), Wilber et al. (1986), see also Washburn (1995).

[49] Walsh (1980, 1988).

[50] Ibid., Wilber et al. (1986).

inherent developmental potential, and even of causing iatrogenic harm by employing inappropriate treatment modalities.[51] Instead of interpreting the phenomena at hand only in terms of the hitherto available psychopathological schemata—as regressive and pathological states—they should, according to transpersonal psychologists, be conceived of rather in terms of the extended developmental models which had recently become available—as a crisis of growth, as a difficult stage on the way towards a more comprehensive, transpersonal, or spiritual self-actualization.[52] In this context, the distinction between pre-personal-regressive and transpersonal-progressive psychological states, as well as the drawing up of distinguishing criteria for assigning these phenomenologically kindred states, was viewed in particular as a genuine contribution by transpersonal psychology to developmental psychology and differential diagnostics. The subject came to be discussed in the literature under the concept of the "pre/trans-fallacy."[53]

Transpersonal psychology was further characterized by the fact that—with a view to its object of research—the paradigmatic presuppositions, as well as the research orientations and prevailing epistemological approaches of established academic psychology, were critically questioned. Since one of the key issues in transpersonal psychology was exploring spirituality as experienced reality, and was therefore directly related to the systematic exploration of consciousness and its possible states, the scientific approaches and methods that had held sway until then were deemed inadequate.[54] In order to improve matters, it was proposed to adopt more comprehensive means of securing knowledge within the framework of conventional mainstream psychology that would correspond more effectively with this specific topic of study.[55] In particular Roger Walsh worked out in this connection that—and in what way—the study of Asian consciousness disciplines from the perspective of Western behavioral science had led to a paradigm clash that hindered a proper understanding of the Asian traditions and a true evaluation of their implications.[56]

Similarly the majority of transpersonal-oriented psychologists were of the opinion that scientific researchers should be familiar with the states they were investigating through their own experience. To their minds, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the states they were studying, it was not enough to simply acquire a theoretical, conceptual knowledge of the contemplative traditions and their practices: It was much more important that this had to be complemented by

[51] Eg. Walsh and Vaughan (1993b). The actual relevance of clinical patterns of this kind is, however, hard to estimate because to this day representative data is available neither from the American nor the German fields.

[52] Bragdon (1988), Grof and Grof (1989, 1990), Hood (1984), Walsh and Vaughan (1993b), and Wilber (1986a, b).

[53] Wilber (1980).

[54] Walach et al. (2005).

[55] Tart (1972), Walach et al. (2005), Walsh (1980, 1992), Walsh and Vaughan (1993b), and Walsh et al. (1980).

[56] Walsh (1980, 1988), see also Walsh et al. (1980).

personal inner experience. Reflecting this, Walsh writes that "there are limitations on understanding transpersonal experiences and insights without direct experience of them."[57] In the case of purely observing these phenomena from the perspective of a mentally-, rationally-oriented ordinary waking state of consciousness, there is a danger of a state-specific bias, in the sense that the implications of the altered state of consciousness under investigation may be misinterpreted.[58] In doing so, there is also ultimately a risk of not gaining a sufficient grasp of the depths and subtleties of the philosophies and psychologies in the contemplative traditions.[59]

Walsh has pointed repeatedly in this connection to the importance of what are termed "gnostic intermediaries."[60] This term was coined by Jung in his introduction to Richard Wilhelm's work *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Jung referred here to Wilhelm's personal ability to imbibe the knowledge of the "Eastern traditions" so deeply that he was able on the basis of his own experience to communicate it and translate it into the language and concepts of the culture he was addressing.[61] According to Walsh, three elements and abilities are required before one can be termed a gnostic intermediary:

> first one must imbibe and become the wisdom oneself, the second requirement is linguistic and conceptual competence of the people and culture to which they wish to communicate, third the gnostic intermediaries must be able to translate the wisdom from the wisdom bearing culture into the language and conceptual system of the recipient community.[62]

This challenge is faced, as Walsh tells us, by all who wish to draw on the treasure trove of experience and wisdom of the contemplative traditions and to convey these to others. Many of the transpersonal psychologists, who could often draw on their own experiences with the Asian traditions of consciousness development, clearly regarded themselves as just such gnostic intermediaries and they expected to benefit from a mutual enrichment of the insights from Western and Eastern psychologies. The underlying assumption was that the two epistemologies and ways of seeing could fruitfully augment one another to yield an all-embracing picture of the possible stages of self-development, the specific vulnerabilities associated with each of them, as well as the state-specific psychopathologies that might ensue from them.[63]

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[57] Walsh (2009, 115).

[58] See here Charles Tart's (1972) much-regarded article in *Science*, "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences."

[59] Walsh (1980).

[60] Walsh (1992, 2009).

[61] Walsh (1992).

[62] Summarized after Walsh (2009, 116).

[63] Walsh (1992), Walsh and Vaughan (1993a), and Wilber et al. (1986).

The Symptomatology of the Kundalini Syndrome

The literature pertaining to psychotherapy from North America and Europe, especially that from the broader field of transpersonal psychology, began in around the early 1990s to report an increasing incidence of specific clinically relevant patterns of phenomena, which were, according to the authors, reminiscent of what is described in the Indian yoga literature as *kuṇḍalinī* awakening. Some exponents of transpersonal psychology even regard such *kuṇḍalinī*-type experiences as the most prevalent type of "spiritual emergency."[64] The spread of the concept among interested academics was above all fanned by the publication of the book *Kundalini Psychosis or Transcendence* by the psychiatrist Lee Sanella, as well as by an anthology entitled *Kundalini Evolution and Enlightenment* by John White.[65] In addition, in their works *Spiritual Emergency. When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* and *The Stormy Search for the Self: A Guide to Personal Growth through Transformational Crisis,* Stanislav and Christina Grof introduced the concept of spiritual emergency in a popular psychology book that made it accessible to specialists and laypeople alike.[66] In these works the phenomenon of the *kuṇḍalinī* awakening was also introduced as a manifestation of spiritual emergency and described in more detail. The main characteristics of such a *kuṇḍalinī*-type set of symptoms are a plenitude of somato-sensory or "energy" phenomena, especially moving along the spine, a broad spectrum of psycho-vegetative phenomena and complaints, unusual perceptions, primarily of an acoustic and visual nature, spontaneous involuntary body movements, spontaneous alterations of consciousness, and also profound spiritual experiences.

The evocation of *kuṇḍalinī-type* processes in "Westerners" is in most cases connected with psycho-spiritual practices or a spiritual life context. In the case histories or in the phase immediately preceding, we can often find psycho-spiritual practices related to yoga, e.g. meditation, breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*), posture practice (*āsana*), the performance of *mudrā* (hand gesture), *bhanda* (muscle locks), visualizations or concentration on certain "centers" in the body. But the triggers for these processes are by no means restricted to yoga practices. Equally other cultural forms of meditation, body-oriented approaches, or breathing exercises may be involved. Generally the people concerned report that for several years they had been practicing a mixture of different forms of psychotherapeutic self-experience, diverse body-oriented methods which are meant to influence purported subtle energies, as well as different kinds of spiritual practice. Given the frequent connection between these phenomena and a spiritual orientation and practice, and that similar patterns of phenomena have mainly been reported to date in yoga literature, this clinical picture has also been referred to and conceived of by a number of

[64] Grof and Grof (1990) and Bragdon (1988).
[65] Sanella (1987) and White (1979).
[66] Grof and Grof (1989, 1990).

authors as the Kundalini syndrome.[67] Cross-cultural anthologies and/or analyses of such cases of a purported *kuṇḍalinī* awakening have been presented by Sanella, Greenwell, and also Hofmann.[68] To give an impression of what the picture of *kuṇḍalinī*-type clinically-relevant symptoms might look like, I would like to quote a case described by the American psychiatrist John Nelson:

> Patricia, a 27-year-old artist and musician, was referred to me by her family physician for "vague, poorly localized somatic complaints suggestive for hysteria or incipient psychosis." Patricia said that her symptoms began shortly after she began practicing a meditation technique that required her to curl her tongue backward and hold it tightly against the roof of her mouth. As she adopted this unusual posture, known to experienced yogis as a potent way to alter consciousness, she also increased her meditation time from one to two hours a day.
>
> Patricia's symptoms began with a dull ache in the area of her anus. As the sensation gradually moved up her back, it turned into a fiery pain, "as if someone were running a blowtorch up my spine." ... She also described a peculiar feeling of being "tickled from inside," and she felt compelled to twist her neck and torso at odd angles to relieve the inner itch. On occasion her tongue would spontaneously draw back in her mouth as in her meditation posture, and her hands would contort into odd positions, something like the mudras portrayed in statues of Hindu and Buddhist deities. At this point Patricia's physician tested her for colitis, epilepsy, pelvic inflammatory disease, and a pinched spinal nerve, with negative findings.
>
> Patricia reported that along with her physical symptoms she began having vivid dreams of jungle scenes with large boa constrictors winding themselves around her and slowly crushing her. Sometimes these images would appear while she was awake and frighten her. She also heard loud hissing sounds, like those made by snakes. She reported other disturbing experiences that she called "imaginations," but she refused to describe these further ... Never having encountered such a bewildering and disconnected array of symptoms before, I naively feared that she might be developing a schizophrenic condition. After discussing the pros and cons with her, I decided to offer her a trial on the neuroleptic medicine Haldol.
>
> This medicine did not alleviate Patricia's symptoms, but made her feel much worse—depressed, confused, unable to concentrate, more restless than ever. Just as I was about to inform her that I was unable to determine the cause of her symptoms and was therefore obliged to refer her to the university medical center for further tests, I attended a humanistic-psychology conference where Dr. Sanella described the symptoms of the Kundalini experience. This led me to read the early self-published version of his book and to read Gopi Krishna's personal account of his similar experience. These prompted me to suggest that Patricia temporarily reduce her meditations to an hour a day, cease using the folded-tongue posture and temporarily add some fish to her strict vegetarian diet. I also suggested that she take up running or swimming to balance her meditations. She conformed reluctantly, but enjoyed an immediate relief of the more unpleasant of her symptoms. We both agreed that she had little need for further psychiatric treatment.[69]

[67] Greyson (1993), Nelson (1994), and Thalbourne and Fox (1999).

[68] Greenwell (1990), Hofmann (1995), and Sanella (1987).

[69] Nelson (1994, 273–274).

Clinical Assessment of a *Kuṇḍalinī*-Type Syndrome

In earlier editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) there was no appropriate category for classifying *kuṇḍalinī*-type clinical problems. Only from 1994 onwards (the fourth edition) do we find some innovations that could be referred to.[70] One of them is the recently included V-code category of "religious or spiritual problem[s]" (V 62.89), the other is the "glossary of culture bound syndromes." Both categories have emerged from the need to show greater consideration towards cultural factors in psycho-diagnostics and treatment in which religious beliefs and patterns of interpretation play a central part. In the past, the DSM was repeatedly criticized for neglecting psychosocial and cultural factors that have a major bearing on patterns of mental health and pathology and their definition. In their place were decontextualized clusters of symptoms, described independently of the meaning and influence of the respective cultural backgrounds. This was seen by a number of scholars as detrimental. Moreover, the DSM is increasingly used for an ethnically diverse patient population, with religion and spirituality being perceived by a number of mental health professionals as among the most important cultural factors.[71]

The Rise of *Kuṇḍalinī* as a "Religious or Spiritual Problem"

The diagnostic category "religious or spiritual problem" is included in the DSM-IV in the section entitled "other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention."[72] This category is meant to delineate problematic patterns of spiritual and religious experience that are the focus of psychiatric treatment or diagnosis, but which are not necessarily attributable to a mental disorder. The advantage of this kind of V-code is above all that attention can be directed to topic areas and forms of experiences, which can be exceptionally problematic and stressful, without designating them from the outset as having the character of a disorder.

The proposal to include such a category of religious or spiritual problems was submitted in 1991 by the clinical psychologists and psychiatrists David Lukoff, Francis Lu, and Robert Turner. According to them, their point of departure was that a line of evidence points to a lack of regard in clinical training, research, theory, and practice for areas of experience connected with religion and spirituality.[73] Even if the word "kundalini" is not mentioned in any way in the category description in the DSM-IV, the proponents who moved for this category to be included explicitly named *kuṇḍalinī awakening* in a subsequent article as a possible example of such a

[70] American Psychiatric Association (1994).

[71] Lukoff et al. (1992, 1995).

[72] American Psychiatric Association (1994).

[73] Lukoff et al. (1992).

religious or spiritual problem.[74] Moreover, the authors point out that the impetus to include this category came from transpersonal diagnosticians and the spiritual emergency movement.[75] In their opinion, one could categorize the milder but nevertheless problematic patterns of symptoms that constitute spiritual crises (including the *kuṇḍalinī-type* experience) as a non-pathological and purely spiritual problem. Nevertheless, as the authors note, crises of this kind may also take a difficult turn and precipitate forms of mental disorders or aggravate already existing disorders.[76]

The inclusion of the category "religious or spiritual problem" in the DSM has, in the view of the proponents, various merits and far-reaching implications for psychotherapy and research. In concrete terms, the benefits brought by this category are as follows:

- The recognition of the category grants the possibility of improving the precision of diagnostic assessment as regard spiritual and religious issues.
- The occurrence of iatrogenic harm resulting from incorrectly diagnosed religious and spiritual problems can be reduced.
- The category could lead to improved treatment for these problems by stimulating clinical research.
- Clinical training centers might be encouraged in this way to pay attention to the religious and spiritual dimensions of human experience.
- By establishing this new category, the clinicians' attention will be directed to literature that has a bearing on religious and spiritual problems.
- The category contributes to a greater cultural sensitivity.[77]

The establishment of such a category, the wording of which continues to be rather vague, is thus a mirror of the current state of the research on this subject and can only be further differentiated and clarified by additional research.

The Rise of *Kuṇḍalinī* as a Culture-Bound Syndrome

In addition to the foregoing, there are also points of reference between the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon and the newly established glossary of "culture-bound syndromes." As stated in DSM-IV, the term culture-bound syndrome denotes

> recurrent, locality-specific patterns of aberrant behavior and troubling experience that may or may not be linked to a particular DSM-IV diagnostic category. Many of these patterns are indigenously considered to be "illnesses," or at least afflictions, and most have local names … culture-bound syndromes are generally limited to specific societies or culture

[74] Turner et al. (1995).

[75] Lukoff et al. (1998).

[76] Turner et al. (1995).

[77] Summarized after Lukoff et al. (1992, 1995); as well as after Turner et al. (1995).

> areas and are localized, folk, diagnostic categories that frame coherent meanings for certain repetitive, patterned, and troubling sets of experiences and observations. There is seldom a one-to-one equivalence of any culture-bound syndrome with a DSM diagnostic entity. Aberrant behavior that might be sorted by a diagnostician using DSM-IV into several categories may be included in a single folk category.[78]

The knowledge of such culture-bound symptom patterns and culture-specific patterns of interpretation should ensure a culture-sensitive approach to patients who belong to a different ethnic or cultural background to that of the diagnostician using the DSM.[79] In the case of a culture-bound syndrome, the diagnostician is called on to consider the connection between the syndrome in question and the relevant DSM disorder categories. This also includes the new category of religious and spiritual problems. According to the DSM-IV, some of the culture-bound syndromes span a spectrum from normal forms of affliction that are not accompanied by mental disorders to symptom presentations that are linked with the diagnosis of a mental disorder. As stated in the DSM, all industrialized countries have in the meantime come to include self-contained subcultures that may evince culture-bound syndromes. The DSM lists 23 of the best studied culture-bound syndromes, giving the names of the conditions, the cultures (here countries) in which they were first described, along with a brief description of the salient psychopathological features.[80] One of these syndromes is the "qi-gong psychotic reaction."[81] At particular risk here according to the DSM are people who are overly involved in the practice of qi-gong.[82] The DSM does not mention at this point whether the syndrome has also been observed among people who are not of Chinese extraction. This indicates, however, that culture-bound syndromes must not necessarily be restricted to geographic areas or to members of specific ethnic groups, but can equally manifest in all societies, within the specific subcultures in which the relevant practices are found.[83] In addition, the culture-specific interpretational schemata, associated with these practices and processes, are also often adopted—at least in the relevant subcultures.

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[78] American Psychiatric Association (1994, 844).

[79] Ibid., xxiv.

[80] Ibid.

[81] According to the DSM, the "qi-gong psychotic reaction" refers to an "acute, time-limited episode characterized by dissociative, paranoid, or other psychotic or nonpsychotic symptoms that may occur after participation in the Chinese folk health-enhancing practice of qi-gong ('exercise of vital energy')" (ibid, 847).

[82] According to the DSM, this diagnosis is listed in the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (ibid.).

[83] Thus, for example, an article in a special qi-gong issue of the German language magazine *DAO Magazin fernöstlicher Lebens-Kunst* reports on an increased incidence of clinical phenomena triggered by the practice of a special form of qi-gong that had many adherents in the early 1980s. According to the author, this led to a drop in the number of people who practiced this particular form of qi-gong. Both the description of the phenomenon as well as the "traditional" interpretational schemata associated with these practices (releasing energy blockages etc.), evince strong parallels with those of the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon (Engelhard 1994).

Ultimately this means that at least this form of what is termed by the DSM a culture-specific syndrome tends gradually to expand and become a transcultural phenomenon—both regards the symptoms themselves as well as the interpretation of the processes involved.

On the Transculturality of Patients

In his article on the concept of "transculturality,"[84] the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch emphasizes that transcultural phenomena are not only identifiable on a macro-social level, but also in the form of a transcultural formation of the individual, or to put it in other words—an "internal transculturality."[85] As he writes: "One should not simply say that present-day societies bring together different cultural models ('cultural diversity'), but pay attention rather to the fact that individuals today are influenced by a number of cultural patterns and bear the imprint of different cultural elements."[86] Following Welsch, ultimately we as people of the twenty-first century have all in this sense become wanderers between different cultural worlds. And this is true especially for seekers in Europe or North America who have embraced Asian philosophies and systems of belief and interest themselves in "meditational" or "denominational yoga" in their striving to achieve psycho-spiritual transformation.[87] These people must be seen far more as wanderers between the worlds (in Welsch's sense) than those who chiefly practice yoga as gymnastics, mindful fitness, or as means for fostering health, because these approaches aim essentially at a fundamental transformation of our experience and of our understanding of self and world.[88] Western psychology and psychotherapy is thus faced with the challenge of finding suitable ways to address the clinical problems that are potentially linked with such processes. This calls not only for a specific expertise with regard to the possible effects of spiritual practices, but also for a sensitive approach to the interpretational schemata and world views associated with these. However, to date the subject of "cultural sensitivity" has primarily been discussed under the aspect that, with the growing multicultural nature of Western societies, psychotherapists have to treat an increasing number of people from other nations and ethnic groups. The problem of an inherently hybrid or transcultural

[84] Unlike the geographically and extensionally determined concept of culture that held sway for so long, Welsch's concept of "transculturality" is marked by the interpenetration and interweaving of cultural contents—as for instance daily routines, social etiquette, beliefs, or world views—across various areas divided in terms of their geography and national identity.

[85] Welsch (2009), see also Welsch (1999).

[86] German original, ibid, 47.

[87] The categories "meditational" and "denominational yoga" were suggested by De Michelis (2008).

[88] See Walsh (1988).

personality, in the sense of the "internal transculturality," has scarcely been taken into account.

The Indologist and professor of religious studies Michael von Brück has noted, in connection with the employment of methods from Asian medicinal systems, just how important it is for a person's health to be able to create consistent interpretations in their world views and images of man. In his opinion, too great a disparity between various cultural systems of interpretation will encourage pathological developments. As he writes, "Disintegrated intellectual structures in which self-image, interpretation of society, images of the world and the meaning of the whole diverge wildly not only lead to a chaos of differing information and an inability to orientate oneself, but are also pathogenic."[89] So it seems to be more than just an intellectually stimulating question when we ask how the systems of knowledge in Asian traditions can be meaningfully incorporated into the conceptual frameworks of science, and what are the possible interfaces between "Western" psychology and the "Eastern" spiritual traditions or "consciousness disciplines." Indeed, this is an urgent question, given the transcultural developments throughout society and their impact on the individual.

However, the attempt to uphold cultural divisions between Western and Eastern world views and practices, as was still advocated in Jung's days, seems to have been washed aside long ago by the tide of time. The philosopher Welsch likewise thinks that holding on to cultural divisions and cultural diversity is an atavism. In his opinion, "cultural evolution" always includes the demise or at least an altered continuation of cultural forms. And it is precisely through this, according to Welsch, that "cultural evolution" distinguishes itself: It "lives not from the ideals of conservation, as in a museum, but through the pressure of historical surpassing and historical disappearance."[90] Welsch hypothesizes that humankind is currently entering a phase marked by a lessening of cultural differences. In this process, the cultural patterns which have developed as a result of cultural differentiation are undergoing a process of increasing mutual interpenetration and entanglement. The resulting blending of cultural patterns is leading to a situation in which humanity is developing more points in common than was true of the previous phases, when difference was emphasized. As he puts it, "transculturality seems to be leading to a novel cultural communality."[91] The involvement with the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon and its translation into systems of concepts as well as a terminology that suit the times seems to be one such joint enterprise performed by the adherents of both the "Western" and "Eastern" psychologies.

[89] German original, Brück (2009, 42).

[90] German original, Welsch (2009, 61), see also Welsch (1999).

[91] German original, Welsch (2009, 62).

A Few Concluding Remarks

A finely teased-out analysis of transpersonal psychology, the concept of spiritual emergency, and the DSM code for a "religious or spiritual problem," as well as their historical developments and current implications, was beyond the scope of the present article.[92] But this much may be said: even if transpersonal psychology and the concept of spiritual emergency are outside the scientific mainstream, they, together with the findings from meditation research, have nevertheless contributed to a more differentiated state of knowledge and an intensified discussion of such phenomena and their clinical and psychotherapeutic implications.[93]

The new V-code in the DSM which this has prompted has, on the one hand, the merit of offering the possibility of a non-pathological category for a spiritual or religious problem. On the other hand, it is now recognized that such problems may also coexist with conditions of mental disorder. This amounts to an acknowledgement of the reality that is frequently faced by psychotherapeutic practitioners in their day-to-day clinical work, and to which insufficient justice was done by the concept of the spiritual emergency, with its tendency to polarize growth processes on the one side, and pathology on the other. The potential that resides in this code lies in the fact that the general sensitivity to the topic is thus increased. Over and beyond this, attention is more strongly directed to the relevant therapeutic literature and theoretical models.

As far as the subject of *kuṇḍalinī* is concerned: it turns out that despite the transcultural appropriation of the *kuṇḍalinī* concept—at least within certain subcultures in Western society—the associated phenomena continue to resist their seamless transfer and inclusion into scientific concepts and systems. The basis of such "energy phenomena" continues to remain unexplained by the natural sciences. Similarly the ontological status of such a subtle life force, as postulated by many Asiatic traditions, remains contested from the scientific perspective.[94] According to von Brück, salvation and healing concepts from various cultures rest on "different views held by people and the systems in which they are embedded." He recommends that we conceive of them as different approaches to a complex reality "that we have yet to fully understand." Even if different ways of seeing are not totally compatible, they might "augment and complement each other, until perhaps in the future a higher level framework will be identified on which the contradictions are resolved."[95] It is possible that this is an attitude that will also prove conducive when approaching the *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenon.

[92] See in this connection Hofmann (2009); for a critical analysis of transpersonal psychology see Ferrer (2002) and Walach et al. (2005).

[93] On the findings on meditation research with implications for clinical practice see Scharfetter (1991), Wilber et al. (1988), and Shapiro and Walsh (1984).

[94] Benor (2004) and Madert (2007).

[95] German original, Brück (2009, 45–46).

As we have seen and as was to be expected, the encounter with the concepts originating in Kundalini Yoga literature has not profoundly modified the discipline of psychology or the practice of psychotherapy. Nor can we say that it was a direct path from the concepts and the practices associated with the rising of *kuṇḍalinī* to the changes we can now observe in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and psycho-diagnostics. It is rather the case that the conceptualization of *kuṇḍalinī* is just one piece of jigsaw among many, but nevertheless an important one. Over the years these pieces have contributed to one or another aspect that has changed in these fields. This can especially be seen in a greater sensitivity regarding cultural factors, of which religious beliefs and practices are a central component.

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Part II
Inconsistent Assessments: Meaning Production at the Local-Global Interface

Touching the Limits, Assessing Pain: On Language Performativity, Health, and Well-Being in Yoga Classes

Beatrix Hauser

Abstract Transcultural flows are communicated through various channels. For most of them language is instrumental in mediating and resituating cultural meanings. Taking the case of modern Hatha Yoga, this chapter focuses on the ways in which distinct types of tutorials contribute to the cultural translation of this bodily practice. I explore habitual language use in yoga classes in its capacity to shape and reformulate notions on the body, self, and well-being. This analysis focuses on two highly standardized examples of postural yoga, both practiced in Germany: (1) Bikram Yoga, a fairly recent and demanding form of yoga that emphasizes extensive stretching, muscle formation, and balance, performed in a training hall heated to forty degrees Celsius; and (2) *Yoga for Everyone* as promoted by Kareen Zebroff. Her yoga instructions on television and in books can be considered a paradigm for yoga gymnastics that in the 1970s facilitated the popularization of postural yoga in Germany and elsewhere. The comparison clearly shows the contrasts between various types of teaching postural yoga, and also in what respect the approach to yoga as a method of maintaining a healthy body seems to have changed in the last decades. I argue that some of the more recent fashions of Hatha Yoga (again) convey more than physical education; rather they call upon the self as an agent to transgress personal and bodily limits. In a post-secular and liberalized setting these techniques to enhance human flexibility and performance are framed within the health discourse.

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Introduction

This chapter looks at those forms of modern postural yoga that are advertised and practiced as techniques to maintain and achieve a healthy body. This is clearly the most dominant and popular strand in today's transnational yoga world, and associated and identified with Hatha Yoga.[1] However, the notion of yoga as a form of physical education, as a preventive system, a workout to increase body performance, or as mind-body exercise, only evolved in the twentieth century. Recently, Joseph Alter, Elizabeth De Michelis, Mark Singleton, and other scholars have shown in what ways modern forms of yoga can be seen as cultural hybrids, having absorbed a variety of novel elements.[2] In this process, breathing techniques (*prāṇāyāma*) and posture practice (*āsana*) have been associated with health and curative effects from the 1920s onwards. Following Singleton, teaching the health benefits of yoga goes back to Shri Yogendra who in 1919 gave perhaps the first modern yoga classes addressing the Indian middle class in a suburb of Mumbai (formerly: Bombay). Cooperating with medical doctors, Yogendra also spread yoga in the United States. The credit for starting laboratory research on the healing powers of yoga postures, contractions, and breathing techniques goes to Swami Kuvalayananada who in 1924 founded the research institute Kaivalyadhama at Lonavla (a hill station between Mumbai and Pune).[3]

Today it is widely regarded as self-evident that the regular practice of postural yoga, based primarily on *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, is healthy. First, knowledge about the health benefits of each exercise and (assumed) ways an exercise works are conveyed during yoga classes and in a variety of yoga manuals.[4] Secondly, clinical and laboratory research has focused on the measurable effects of particular postures and breath control, mainly with positive results.[5] Hence the practice of postural

[1] The term "Hatha Yoga" has become a synonym for modern postural yoga, although in medieval Indian theology *haṭhayoga* described ritual traditions that employed the human body for soteriological means. On the revaluation of yoga and resulting problems of classification see this book's introduction.

[2] Alter (2004), De Michelis (2004), and Singleton (2010).

[3] Singleton (2010, 115–122) and Alter (2004, 84); see also Goldberg, cited in Newcombe (2009, 990). Both "Yogendra" and "Kuvalayananda" are spiritual names adopted by Manibhai Haribhai Desai (1897–1989) and, respectively, Jagannath G. Gune (1883–1966). Although some yogic exercises (*āsana*, *mudra*, *bhanda*) have been described in tantric literature as useful to ward of any disease, these promises should be seen as embedded within a wider magico-spiritual agenda rather than conceptualized as health benefits in a modern sense (see the introduction of this volume). On a Hindu notion of health as metaphysical perfection see Alter (1999).

[4] At times, these descriptions assume an overtly mechanistic understanding of the human body and thus go far beyond biomedical understanding, e.g., regarding the way in that the headstand would improve the blood circulation of the brain (see "Mythos Kopfstand" in *Viveka* 17 October 1999, www.viveka.de/artikel.php, accessed 22 August 2011).

[5] There has been an incalculable number of individual medico-scientific studies on the particular health effects of yoga exercises, yet comparatively few up-do-date books and systematic reviews on the subject (De Michelis 2007; Ross and Thomas 2010; Saxton 2011; on the risk of injury

yoga is recommended for coping with various symptoms and diseases associated with the modern lifestyle such as stress, depression, sleep disorder, muscle tension, migraine, chronic pain disorder, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, to name but a few. However, what actually constitutes a healthy person is neither universal nor timeless. Medical anthropology has shown that the subjective assessment of human well-being and health-seeking behavior is shaped by various influences, ranging from economic needs to cultural discourses.[6] Furthermore, in industrialized modern nation states a healthy body has turned into a social asset by itself. To keep oneself fit and free of disease is considered an obligation and thus a matter of morality. In recent decades this duty has seemingly expanded to also include notions of emotional balance, mental flexibility, and self-care.[7]

In what follows I consider yoga classes as a cultural site for the social negotiation of what actually constitutes beneficial exercise and a person with a healthy body; with this in mind, I shall focus on habitual language use in yoga tutorials. In my view, language is also crucial for identifying meanings and modulating experience in the course of a transcultural encounter, and a traveling bodily practice such as Hatha Yoga in particular. To address the effects of yoga classes in socio-cultural terms does not negate the significance of yoga exercises and their potential for changing the biomedical status of the human body. Rather it is assumed that measurable results in the body go hand in hand with altered body awareness and, in respect to yoga's global currents, with newly gained knowledge about the mind-body-nexus, well-being, and health. This process may induce changes in the way the abilities and limitations of the body are conceived, in how agency is assessed to manipulate bodily processes, and in forms of coping with discomfort and pain. Although there are several factors that may influence the somatic experience of yoga practitioners—ranging from social context to individual preferences regarding the class situation—the major instrument for (re-)shaping notions of a healthy body is, I suggest, verbal instruction. Following theories on the performativity of language, my assumption is that speech conventions have tremendous influence on

caused by yoga see also the popular book by journalist Broad 2012). Although yoga inventions appear to be equal or superior to other forms of exercise and evidentially improve a variety of health-related conditions, it is problematic to draw general conclusions from these studies. Their validity is limited to distinct health related aspects, types of yoga (gentle or vigorous), and kinds of population (regarding health status, age, gender); moreover the number of participants is often small and the duration of the survey varies from only a single session to six months (Ross and Thomas 2010, 6). Extensive bibliographical references on studies about the physiological, psychological, and biochemical benefits of yoga are provided by the International Association of Yoga Therapists on their homepage (www.iayt.org, accessed 15 January 2012).

[6] On basic assumptions in social anthropology on the conceptualization of health see Janzen (2002); for an example of a culture-specific health concept see Alter (1999). A wide and relative perspective on health has been also acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO) which in 1948 defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Constitution of the World Health Organization, see www.who.int, accessed 15 January 2012).

[7] For the recent discourse on self-care see Ziguras (2004); on the issue of flexibility see Martin (1995).

how the regular performance of yoga exercises changes the subjective perspective of the body and its potential for self-development.[8] Seen thusly, instructions to teach yoga do not only serve as a didactic device. Whether intended or not, they also communicate how yoga practitioners should feel and think about their corporeal self vis-à-vis the "lived-in world" (Thomas Csordas). This is not to say that the effects of yoga postures are merely suggestive. Rather, yoga works not only on a physical but also on a discursive level. Among several other effects, I shall argue, it challenges socially learned cultural attitudes towards personal limits. Moreover, the analysis of habitual language use in yoga classes may also help to understand why Hatha Yoga as a preventive program resonates with specific audiences. As it will be shown further down, the comparison of tutorial styles raises the question of to what extent recent yoga fashions reframe bodily limitations and the sensation of pain during the performance of a posture, from being a warning signal against exaggeration and overwork to an indicator of a successful transformation process bringing the body and self to perfection. Although regular yoga practice influences body awareness in many respects, I focus on the issue of pain since it is directly linked to the personal assessment of psychophysical limits. It will turn out that in social settings shaped by economic liberalization and post-secular thought the ability to cross these personal limits is promoted within the health discourse and only secondarily regarded as a spiritual encounter.

Initially, the idea to explore language use during yoga classes was not driven by theorizing on transcultural flows. Rather, I started practicing Bikram Yoga after a long pause—I had previous experiences with Hatha Yoga 16 and then 6 years ago.[9] I was puzzled by the contrasting style of tutorial and wondered how to make sense of this difference. Being a social anthropologist with a background in ritual studies and Hinduism I gradually developed a professional interest in the impact of language for the transmission of Hatha Yoga. At the beginning of 2009, I started to make field notes on my own and others' reactions in this Bikram Yoga studio. I generated a working hypothesis and observed the communication during and after class more systematically. Additionally, I analyzed (remembered and recorded) instructions of several yoga teachers and interviewed some of them.[10] In the following I wish to explore the data of this study against the background of earlier conventions of teaching Hatha Yoga in Germany. Methodologically this proved to be difficult since there are hardly any recordings of yoga classes from previous

[8] There is extensive literature on language and performance (e.g., Wirth 2002), drawing in one way or the other on John Austin's (1962) theory of language performativity as introduced in his seminal book *How to Do Things with Words*.

[9] Since 2007 I have attended Bikram Yoga classes regularly. In 2001 I had joined a short course in Kundalini Yoga tailored for pregnant women. My initial encounter with Hatha Yoga was by means of books and, in 1985, through a 2 week retreat in South India in order to learn Sivananda Yoga. However, after this return from India I practiced yoga only occasionally.

[10] I would like to thank Claudia Vahrst and Hans Lamberti who not only allowed insights into the backstage of Bikram Yoga Altona (Hamburg), but also encouraged my research on the relevance of language in yoga tuition in all respects.

decades. Eventually, I decided to consider a tutorial filmed for broadcast on German television. This yoga course started to be aired in 1973 and was called *Yoga für Yeden* (sic), literally: yoga for everyone. Considering the enormous response to this program, this type of teaching demonstration must have hit a nerve with contemporary audience and really met their expectations.[11] Below I shall therefore analyze sequences of this program, viewpoints of the presenter Kareen Zebroff, as well as yoga instructions given in her book that was published along with the TV series.[12] Obviously, a filmed tutorial is only in part representative of yoga instructions at the time. Still, I would claim that it shares crucial features (as will be described below). Since framing yoga as a system of physical exercises suitable for everyone corresponded to approaches taken in adult education centers and sport clubs—major institutions in West Germany for teaching yoga in the 1970s and 1980s—the tutorial's attitude towards yoga (instructions) can be regarded as prime example of making yoga a mainstream activity.[13] Although at this time yoga was not only practiced as a secular activity, today the variety of yoga styles offered is much larger, ranging from religio-spiritual forms of self-actualization, to physiotherapeutic bodywork, and athletic workout. On this background, Bikram Yoga represents a rather exclusive type within the most recent yoga fashion, which spilled over from the United States to Germany at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In short, I shall compare two highly standardized ways of teaching postural yoga, both associated with fitness and health rather than with "spiritual" goals—although even the most profane yoga teachers would probably agree that yoga postures cannot be reduced to a form of gymnastics but rather constitute a system of refining the human being on a more integral level. Both yoga styles are explored as they were and are practiced in Germany. Since similar forms of teaching and marketing postural yoga can be found in many places in Europe, North America, and, gradually, in other continents, the following analysis should not be read as an ethnography of a particular regional yoga community. Rather than allowing conclusions of an explicitly "German" understanding of Hatha Yoga, it gives insight into two contrasting yoga cultures that have spread across national, geographic, religious, and linguistic borders, yet with distinct regional and temporal agglomerations. In conclusion, I shall come back to the question of how the findings of this study exemplify and raise more general issues about the transcultural dissemination of bodily practices, and the specific role language plays in constituting and possibly reframing the somatic experience of practitioners.

[11] *Spiegel*, dated 27 January1975.

[12] I am most grateful to Kareen Zebroff for sharing her memories with me by email (see also www.kareenzebroff.com, accessed 15 January 2012). I am equally indebted to Christoph Kucklick who provided DVD copies of the original yoga program, and also to Walter Hug (Münchner Yoga-Zentrum) for sharing Anneliese Harf's scripts of her yoga program for Südwestfunk in 1978. Many thanks to Sonja Majumder for transcribing yoga tutorials from DVD.

[13] See *Spiegel,* 27 January1975; Fuchs (1990, 203).

Stretching for Self-Development: Bikram Yoga

Bikram Yoga is a form of yoga developed by Bikram Choudhury (*1946), a Bengali who in 1973 migrated to the United States with the intention of teaching yoga to the West. He had received his yoga training at Ghosh's Yoga College in Kolkata, an institute run by Bishnu Charan Ghosh (1903–1970). Like his Indian contemporaries, Bishnu Ghosh favored a blend of physical culture, muscle control, and bodybuilding, and only in the 1940s shifted to Hatha Yoga—last but not least for the highly acrobatic postures that could be performed on stage for an audience.[14] Similarly, Bikram was trained to perform very strenuous and athletic exercises associated with yoga. He claims to have been awarded the All-India National Yoga Champion at the age of 13. In the 1960s he also practiced weightlifting, yet after a severe knee injury focused solely on yoga. When regaining full flexibility he became a yoga teacher. As such, Bikram's autobiographic statements allude to an initiation story in which the protagonist undergoes a life-changing crisis (in this case the accident and the fear of being crippled) before he felt the necessity to spread the wonders of yoga and became a yoga teacher himself. Once he settled in Hollywood, Bikram opened a yoga school and promoted a particular series of yoga exercises obligatory for every class, irrespective of proficiency, physical condition, or age of the practitioner.[15] This curriculum consists of 26 selected postures and two breathing exercises lasting for 90 min altogether.[16] The room is heated to 40° Celsius with humidity of 40 % in order to release tension, "to sweat out toxins" and to facilitate deeper stretching while preventing injuries.[17] Emphasis is given to verbal instruction and only exceptionally will a yoga teacher demonstrate how to perform a posture correctly. Rather, students are taught to control their own

[14] Bishnu Ghosh learned yoga from his elder brother Mukunda Lal Ghosh (1883–1952), who in 1915 had become a monk known as (Paramahansa) Yogananda. Yogananda promoted a meditation system called Kriya Yoga in India and in the United States. He founded the Self-Realization Fellowship and became widely known as the author of *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946). According to Singleton (2010, 132), Yogananda had also developed enormous skill in muscle control through willpower. During his early years in the United States, public displays of his mastery were a major crowd puller. Remaining in Kolkata, Bishnu founded in 1923 Ghosh's College of Physical Education, later renamed as Ghosh's Yoga College (see Guggenbühl 2008). Since 2008 the vice principal of this yoga school is Muktamala Ghosh, Bishnu's granddaughter (see www.ghoshsyoga.com, accessed 15 January 2012). Guggenbühl (2008) assumes that Yogananda became acquainted with postural yoga in Mysore and hence inspired Bishnu Ghosh to consider yoga postures as physical exercise. At any rate, Guggenbühl (2008, 7) doubts whether Bishnu Ghosh had practiced yoga himself or if he preferred bodybuilding and muscle control.

[15] See Choudhury and Reynolds (1978); www.bikramyoga.com, (accessed 15 January 2012). According to Bühnemann's (2007, 31–36) investigation the Bikram Yoga series of exercises actually is a selection from a total of 91 postures taught at Ghosh's Yoga College in the 1970s.

[16] Many of these postures are also standard in other forms of postural yoga, e.g., the eagle pose, the cobra pose, the bow pose, the camel pose, and the spine twisting pose.

[17] The idea of yoga as a method of expulsing toxins by means of sweating has been discussed by Smith (2008, 149–150).

performance with the help of large wall mirrors on one or two sides of the hall. Additionally, an instructor may adjust the holding of a pose. In 1994 Bikram began organizing teacher training on a large scale, a process that contributed to the mushrooming of "Hot Yoga." When in 2002 he managed to hold a US copyright for the distinct combination of exercises and teaching conditions established by him and hence began to accuse nonconformist offshoots to violate rules, a major controversy arose.[18] Meanwhile there are 519 licensed Bikram Yoga studios worldwide associated with the Bikram Yoga College of India, based in Los Angeles.[19] In Germany the Bikram Yoga wave started in 1999; 10 years later there were studios in Hamburg (three), Berlin (two), Munich, Frankfurt, Kiel, and Potsdam.[20] Still, numerically, other forms of yoga are much more popular among Germans.

In Hamburg-Altona, Bikram Yoga is taught in a large studio exclusively reserved for this type of yoga. Reception, training room, and other facilities are designed in a modern, minimalist style; dispersed Buddha statues, fresh orchids, teak benches, lounge music, and large photographs of yoga athletes contribute to the atmosphere. The studio offers 27 yoga classes per week, with an annual average of 21 yoga students per class (in 2009/10). The participation and hence the size of class varies depending on the time of the day, day of the week, and season. Generally between 12 and 45 will visit. They pay per class, per month, or for a multiple visit pass. Seventy percent of the students are 26–42 years old (the peak age-group is 29–33), representing a noticeable gender and ethnic mixture.[21] The staff mainly consists of German women and men, but also includes teachers from the United States, Brazil, and Japan. If required, some classes or sections of classes are taught in English. Yoga practitioners wear a minimum of sportswear (basically shorts, a tank top, bathing trunks) due to the heat. During class students are given almost non-stop precise instructions on the proper performance of a posture, explanations of its health benefits, and reminders to carry out an exercise

[18] This copyright was the basis for franchise yoga studios, see Fish (2006) and Philp (2009, 146–151). The media discourse on this controversy seems to be nourished further by the fact that Bikram is an eccentric, known as the guru of several Hollywood celebrities, claimed millionaire, and, due to several notorious statements, the "bad boy" of yoga. Still, he is by far not the only one to commercialize yoga with the help of propriety claims. According to Fish (2006, 192), there have been hundreds of yoga-related trademarks, copyrights, and patents registered in the United States alone (see introduction).

[19] See www.bikramyoga.com/studiolisting.php, (accessed 1 December 2010). From the total number of 519 Bikram Yoga studios in 36 countries worldwide, 316 are in the United States, and only two in India (Mumbai, Pune). Besides, there are several other yoga studios offering tuition branded as Hot Yoga.

[20] In the meantime there was another Bikram Yoga studio in Erlangen that had to be closed down for personal reasons. The founder had offered Bikram Yoga classes even before 1999 in private tuition and adult education centers. On Bikram Yoga in the United States see Syman (2010), Chap. 13.

[21] This statistical analysis is based on all clients (n = 1016) who visited a yoga class at Bikram Yoga Altona for a minimum of three times in the year 2009/10 (database provided by the owners of this studio).

Fig. 1 Standing bow pose in a Bikram yoga class at Hamburg, 2008 (Courtesy: Bikram Yoga Altona)

simultaneously. Following the program requires complete attention. The suggested postures are very demanding and require extensive stretching, strong muscles, as well as a good sense of balance and coordination (Fig. 1). Although postures are performed slowly, from the initial breathing exercise onwards, the body sweats intensely. Here is an excerpt from my field diary:

> Today the yoga hall seemed to be even hotter. The air was extremely humid; it was really stuffy . . .. I needed to pause a couple of times since I had a sudden feeling of nausea . . .. However, this time the head-to-knee pose turned out quite well. Doing the locust posture was again so demanding that I couldn't think of anything else but keeping my legs up. Just hold them there. Whew . . . just made it! During the final relaxation, every part of my body seemed to vibrate. I felt so heavy, as if the floor will absorb me, leaden, sufficiently worn down and thoroughly content just lying there.[22]

This ambivalent reaction with feelings of exhaustion and happiness is common among Bikram Yoga practitioners. Paying attention to the fast pace of the tutorial, heightened circulation, and heavy sweating produce a cathartic effect. As in a sauna, the individual character of yoga students and their usual self-presentation dissolve into pure corporeality. A Bikram Yoga class thus helps to get away from the everyday; to be reborn, resting in oneself, relaxed, cleansed, energetic. This journey is provoked, directed, and accompanied by verbal instructions.

Every class is structured by the obligatory *Teacher's Dialogue* (for which copyright was obtained), rendered in German. There is, however, a slight variation of this text according to the personality and experience of an instructor. Although called "dialogue," during class, yoga students are not supposed to speak. Rather, they are invited to answer nonverbally, i.e., by means of their bodies. In the following I shall

[22] 1 September 2009, translated from the German.

introduce some of the teachers' speech patterns that usually come with the actual posture briefing. These verbal phrases—here (re-)translated into English—fall into four categories. First there is general advice, for instance "focus on yourself," "look at your image in the mirror and concentrate," "you are your teacher," "now you work on your will power," "jointly start the posture and share your energy so that it will increase," "struggle more" and "if you do it half-heartedly the posture has not begun." Some of these phrases have auto-suggestive character, like "where your mind goes, your body will follow" or "the mirror will reflect your energy." Secondly, there are clear prohibitions: "don't leave the room," "don't drink water during the [performance of] postures,"[23] "don't care about bathing in sweat," "don't compare yourself with your neighbor." Thirdly, there is a lot of positive encouragement and praise. Phrases like "it's a pleasure that you are here," "enjoy the class," "this [performance of posture] is perfect," "you did a good job," "honor your personal effort," and "thank you for sharing your energy" comfort the students.

This carrot and stick rhetoric is further enhanced by remarks about physical reactions that may occur during the performance of a posture, the fourth category in my analysis of speech patterns. These commentaries help students to assess their physical limits and the sensation of pain in particular: "if [in this position] you can't breathe properly, this is normal," "if you feel dizzy now, great; that is how it should feel," "if now your hip joint hurts that is perfectly alright; you want to have this pain; pull hard," "if you feel like dying, you did it correctly." To make it clear, these remarks are intended to increase performance and discipline. Beginners are encouraged to take breaks as needed, as are those who feel lightheaded or sick. As with other forms of postural yoga, there are intervals of supine relaxation. Apart from these intervals, Bikram Yoga motivates students to go beyond their personal limits and to invite sensations of acute discomfort rather than avoiding extremes. "Now you work on your determination!" Painful stimuli are regarded as helpful in order to expand body flexibility. Therefore the obligatory instructions also include phrases asking students to perform "as hard as possible," to "go beyond [their] ... flexibility" in order to create "a tremendous stretching feeling, pain sensation all over."[24] In the yoga studio at Hamburg, teachers often modify these directions in order to compensate for their rigor. They realize that the English *Tutorial Dialogue* cannot be translated literally but requires adjustments to get the right tone.[25] Some instructors use joking prosody, anglicized jargon, and cool metaphors, as the following statement shows: "Initially your elbows will hurt a little, this is not unusual. If your pulse beats like techno, wow, this is pretty normal!"[26] This

[23] Drinking water should be consumed only after the initial exercises and only between posture sets.

[24] Teachers are obliged to follow the *Authorized Teacher's Dialogue* from which these quotations are taken.

[25] At Bikram Yoga Altona, yoga teachers among themselves reflected on the controversial style in that Bikram Yoga instructions were to be given (interview 12 July 2010).

[26] German original: "Wenn das anfangs in den Ellbogen ein bisschen weh tut, ist das nicht ungewöhnlich, ... wenn dein Puls jetzt ein bisschen Techno spielt, wow, das ist völlig normal!" (2 July 2009, during locust pose).

humorous and at times self-ironical attitude is best exemplified by Bikram himself who is known for opening his class (in the United States) with "welcome to Bikram's torture chamber." However, ordinary Bikram Yoga teachers rather encourage their students and ask them to hold a posture with a smile on their faces, or quickly add some plaudit ("This looks great!," "Now you get the benefits"). At any rate, to go to the personal maximum is considered the prime method for increasing the health benefits of a posture.

It should be clear by now that this particular method of teaching yoga cannot go undisputed. Although Bikram himself claims that his type of yoga can cure all kinds of disease, critics stress the risks of this strenuous practice: fainting, cramps, dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Loren Fishman and Ellen Saltonstall even classify Bikram Yoga as "unsuited to therapeutic work."[27] They identify the health risks of yoga in general as (1) teaching beginners in under-supervised or overcrowded conditions, and (2) surpassing anatomical and fitness-related limits.[28] Obviously, Bikram Yoga must appear suspicious to them. Considering the crowd and heat factor alone, popular yoga camps (*yoga śibir*) in India could be criticized as well, given that in these outdoor camps thousands are instructed to perform yoga in often extremely hot and humid weather conditions.[29] However, during the final relaxation, Bikram Yoga practitioners are reminded of the postures' benefits and in what respect mind and body have been released. The students hence learn how to consider temporary feelings of severe discomfort and overstrain as an indicator of an exercise's efficacy.

Being gradually in a position to perform hitherto unachievable postures seemingly proves the success of reaching and transcending personal limits. In my opinion this phenomenon is not limited to Bikram Yoga. Several types of yoga that have become fashionable since the mid-1990s emphasize vigorous physical workout, for instance Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, Power Yoga, and Jivamukti Yoga. Each of them employs techniques to help practitioners reach their limits. Similarly, in the well-established tradition of Iyengar Yoga students are encouraged to experience and test their bodily flexibility. According to the philosophy of its guru B. K. S. Iyengar (*1918), the pain is present as a teacher, alluding to the didactic role of physical discomfort. A German journalist and yoga adept who in 1990 joined yoga tuition by Iyengar in Pune indeed recalls vigor instructions with orders such as "Hey, give your maximum," "[hold the position] two more minutes. Taste the Yoga of Pain."[30] Regarding an early-morning yoga class for Delhites in

[27] Fishman and Saltonstall (2008, 263). The positive effects of Bikram Yoga were explored by Hart and Tracy (2008); the pros and cons of yoga in a heated room were further assessed by Saxton (2011).

[28] Ibid., 279.

[29] On yoga camps in India see Alter (1997, 2008).

[30] Iyengar, quoted by Bertram Job in "Schmerz ist dein Meister," the title story in the popular German science magazine *Geo*, dated September 1990. The cover of this magazine had a large photograph of Iyengar in his seventies performing a variation of the headstand (*parivṛttaikapāda śīrṣāsana*).

1994, Alter too perceived yoga instructions sounding like coming from a "a drill sergeant," commanding students to "stretch, stretch, stretch harder now .... OK, grab your ankles—c'mon, put a little effort into it! OK, then. All together now. Breath in ... and out .... OK, relax."[31] The strict teaching methods used in several Indian yoga classes seem to echo the Anglo-American fitness mantra "no pain, no gain." However, both settings imply a distinction of good and bad pain.

Bikram Yoga does not only provoke in respect to the assessment of exhaustion and at times painful body sensations. The fairly authoritarian mode of teaching, emphasizing straight commands, discipline, and self-control seems to contradict the image of yoga as a gentle, mindful, soft and effeminate practice, giving attention to introspection and individual body condition.[32] Therefore the professional association of yoga teachers in Germany (Bund der Yogalehrenden in Deutschland, BDY) has been very critical of the "Indian athletics" offered by Bikram Choudhury. According to their view in 2004, Bikram Yoga had hardly anything in common with yoga's "original idea of uniting body, mind, and soul."[33] However, taking this perspective conceals that the cultural imaginaire of yoga as an integral, esoteric, and recreative bodily practice first emerged in a Western context (see below). Moreover, one driving force behind the general acceptance of Hatha Yoga as a secularized mind-body technique in Germany was the flower power generation.[34] They appreciated yoga as an alternative practice, calling upon the liberating aspects of bodily self-determination, carefully avoiding any allusion to discipline and authority, not to speak of business. However, this movement also contributed to yoga becoming mainstream practice and, therefore, by the 1970s the gentleness of yoga was (re-)produced and reflected on in probably all varieties of yoga teaching in Germany.

Popular Sport and Relaxation: Yoga for Everyone

In terms of the number of yoga practitioners and media coverage in 1970s Germany, postural yoga gradually lost its subcultural character. Following estimations by the weekly magazine *Spiegel* in 1975 100,000 West Germans were practicing yoga (equivalent to 4 % of yoga practitioners in the year 2007).[35]

[31] Alter (1997, 320).

[32] On the notion of discipline and authority in Ashtanga Yoga see Smith (2008).

[33] Cited by journalist Julia Johannsen in her article "Bikram Yoga" published by *Yoga Aktuell: Magazin für Yoga und Neues Bewusstsein* 26, 03/2004.

[34] On the development of yoga in Germany and the variety of yoga schools in the 1950s and 1960s see Fuchs (1990, 2006).

[35] *Spiegel*, 27 January 1975. Comparing the number of yoga practitioners between 1975 and 2007 one should note that the population had risen from 61.6 million in former West Germany to 82,2 million inhabitants after reunification (source: Statistisches Bundesamt, www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/Indikatoren/LangeReihen/Bevoelkerung/lrvev03.html, accessed 15 January 2012). Following a market study in 2007 there were about 2.5 million people practicing yoga in Germany,

The market was newly flooded with yoga self-help books, corresponding records and cassettes, thus reflecting the idea of predominantly doing yoga at home.[36] Apart from classes in adult education centers (*Volkshochschule*), one very powerful medium for teaching yoga exercises and spreading knowledge about the health benefits of Hatha Yoga was television. The use of mass media to address larger audiences in order to raise physical fitness was not completely new. German radio stations started broadcasting gymnastic programs from the 1930s onwards, and from 1975 to 1984 a yoga course was offered.[37] Still, the idea of explaining the correct yoga posture by means of television was developed in the United States. In 1961 Richard Hittleman coined a weekly TV format with yoga teachers demonstrating their skills, thereby positioning yoga as physical fitness for women.[38] In 1969 Kareen Zebroff started her daily yoga course on Canadian television where it ran for 16 years. In 1971 British stations began screening a regular twenty-minute course named *Yoga for Health*; similar yoga programs followed until 1986.[39] Ostensibly, the German TV-channel Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) just adopted what had already proven to be an attractive format. The program was called *Yoga für Yeden* (sic), yoga for everyone, taught by Kareen Zebroff (*1941) who, with her German roots, had no difficulties speaking the language. Her weekly yoga course ran from 1973 to 1976, first as a 5-min section during the *ZDF-Sportinformation* and later, slightly extended as part of *ZDF-Drehscheibe*. The composition of *Yoga für Yeden* was generic for TV productions of the early generation, and by means of a frontal camera perspective and real-time playback in some way resembled a stage performance. Moreover, there was hardly any shot composition or visual editing. Instead, a fixed camera simply constantly focused a very slim blonde, dressed in a colorful leotard and tights, practicing yoga

but higher estimations also circulated (*Focus*, 26 May 2007). With regard to the spread of yoga in earlier years there aren't any statistics available but only estimations. Although in the 1960s there were several institutes teaching yoga as a more or less spiritual system, it was still considered an exclusivist vocation. According to the theologian Walter Schmidt (1967), throughout West Germany 45 Hatha Yoga courses were offered in 1966 by an estimated number of 20–30 adult education centers (see also Fuchs 1990, 2006).

Most data given in this section refer to West Germany. To date, knowledge about the spread and practice of yoga in the German Democratic Republic is only fragmentary (Fuchs 2006, 179–182). However, in 1977 the Eastern German newspaper *National-Zeitung* published a series on *Yoganastik für Jedermann* ("yoganastic" for everyone), indicating that the yoga fashion was not limited to West Germany (Fuchs 2006, 180, quoting the magazine *esotera*).

[36] According to Newcombe's (2008) exploration of the development of modern postural yoga in Britain, the number of English publications on yoga doubled during the 1970s (ibid., 30). Similarly the number of practitioners rose from an estimated 5,000 in 1967 to about 100,000 in 1979 (ibid., 172).

[37] See Wilk (2006, 262, 422). Yoga lessons were broadcasted by Südwestfunk; their presenter Anneliese Harf was teaching yoga and had run her own yoga school since 1962 (Fuchs 1990, 106; Tietke 2007, 25; personal communication with Werner Hug, Münchner Yoga-Zentrum).

[38] Singleton (2010, 20). According to Newcombe (2008, 180) the program started only in 1966.

[39] For the spread of yoga by means of British television see Newcombe (2008, 172–196).

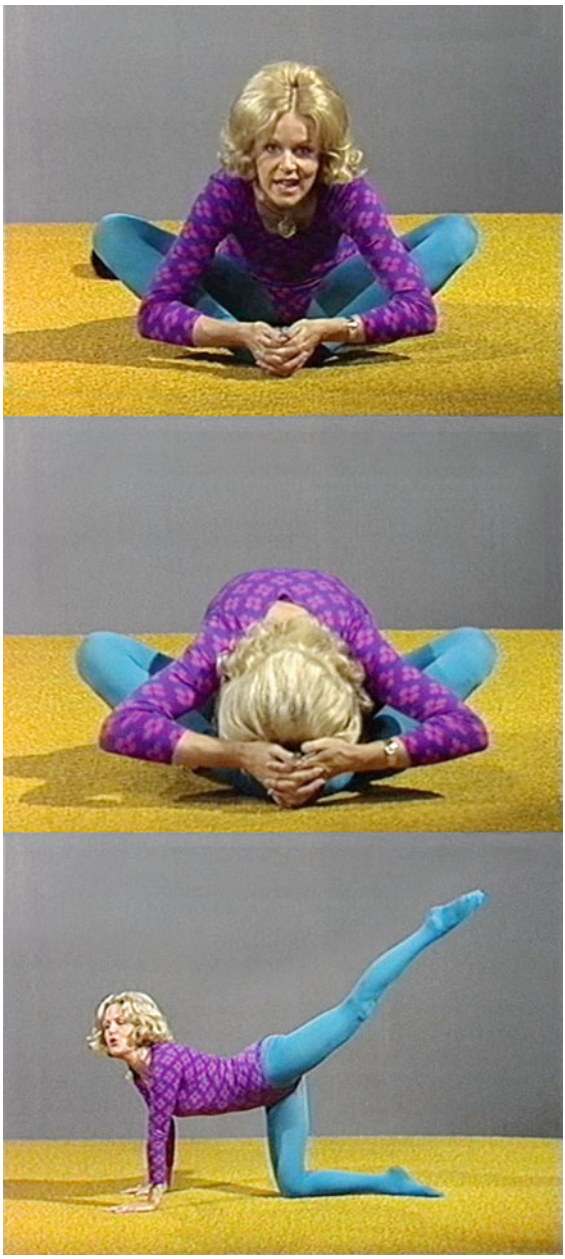

Fig. 2 Kareen Zebroff teaching *Yoga für Yeden* on German television, 1973 (Courtesy: ZDF)

on a wall-to-wall carpet (Fig. 2). In this way Kareen demonstrated week by week how to perform one to three yoga postures correctly. *Yoga für Yeden* created an immense audience response, according to the sport-television presenter, that

exceeded any other program.[40] In 1974 the viewing figures for this afternoon program could be as high as 24 %.[41] Moreover, the corresponding yoga manual immediately became a bestseller with new, partly revised editions, the 2010 edition being the most recent.[42] It (was and) is structured like a recipe book with a brief introduction, chapters on 47 yoga postures, and a few lists of recommended posture routines suitable for practice "during office hours," "for smoking cessation," or for children. Illustrated with photographs, each chapter explains the performance of a posture step-by-step, informs about its respective health benefits and includes tips for advanced practitioners.

Kareen's mode of teaching yoga was in many respects exemplary for rising yoga popularity in Germany at the time. Like many other yoga teachers of the period she was an autodidact and, being a mother of three children, advertised Hatha Yoga as a system of physical exercises particularly useful for "modern people" and "housewives" to generate "fresh energy," youth, as well as an attractive, healthy, slim body.[43] Kareen thought of herself as a cultural translator adapting what "the Indian yogis did 5000 years back" into a technique suitable for modern Western people.[44] She claimed "we are occidentals [*Abendländer*]. From the beginning our lifestyle, our view of life, and our rhythm differs from the Eastern philosophy."[45] She disapproved that "we civilized people are not able to do many things" because "in modern times, with all its stress, our muscles became so strained that at night we almost lost the ability to relax."[46] This drastic opposition not only of Orientals vis-a-vis Westerners but also of ancient times and modern civilization is a popular trope in German yoga discourses of the post-World War II period up to the 1970s. In a similar manner the Indian Selvarajan Yesudian, who in 1949 had opened the first yoga school in Switzerland, contrasted the "perfect prehistoric man" with the "degenerated" lifestyle of modern office employees and civil servants.[47] In Kareen's TV-program Hatha Yoga was promoted as a system to vitalize the body

[40] It is not known whether this response resulted from a genuine wish to learn yoga, the entertainment value of this TV format, or rather the attractiveness of Kareen's yoga presentation. However, since it is at any rate difficult to distinguish these motives, in my analysis I regard the program's success as an indicator as a general interest in this form of Hatha Yoga.

[41] *Spiegel*, 2 September 1974 and 27 January 1975.

[42] Originally the book was published in English as *The ABC of Yoga* (1971). The German version was named *Yoga für Jeden* (1973); the title of revised editions was slightly modified (2010: *Yoga: Übungen für jeden Tag*). Here I shall refer to the German 1975 edition, (re-)translating relevant sections.

[43] Only after her TV career had started, Kareen improved her Hatha Yoga with the help of American and Indian gurus (personal email-communication, 11 July 2010).

[44] *Yoga für Yeden*, 5 October 1973.

[45] Zebroff (1975, 7).

[46] German original: "Lauter Sachen, die wir zivilisierten Leute gar nicht können. Warum können wir das nicht mehr? Weil mit der modernen Zeit, mit all dem Stress, haben sich unsere Muskeln so angespannt, dass wir sie am Abend fast nicht mehr entspannen können" (*Yoga für Yeden 1973*).

[47] Yesudian and Haich (1949, 246–248). The Swiss yoga schools were run in cooperation with Elisabeth Haich.

and regulate its organic functions, i.e., as a tool to relax, to regenerate, to cure minor ailments, and to beautify the body.[48] Yoga was emphasized in this way as a remedy for several side effects of modern life in industrialized nations. Kareen positioned herself as the living example that "yoga works and works wonders."[49] Nevertheless, while comfortably sitting in the lotus position, Kareen reassured her audience: "Don't be afraid, for the next 3 years you do not need to do this [particular posture]. Headstand and lying on a bed of nails is for fakirs only."[50] Explanations on the (apparent) background of Hatha Yoga and its use to combat stress and keep the body in shape constituted about half the tutorial.

Kareen improvised her instructions, mostly in a rather fragmentary style, complemented by her physical demonstration of Hatha Yoga during which she again addressed her audience directly, sharing her personal somatic experience. There was no third voice to comment on her posture performance. Apart from an introductory sitar melody, the program was accompanied by only natural sounds. This created a very informal, personal atmosphere in spite of the restricted artificial setting. The names of yoga postures were merely paraphrased in German, for instance, *Kobra* (cobra pose), *Löwe* (lion pose), *gespreizte Beinstreckung* (straddle leg stretch), *Kerze* (literally "candle," referring to a shoulder stand), but also to more general warm-up and gymnastic exercises like *Katzenstreckung* (stretching like a cat), *Arm-Hebung* (arm lifting), and *Rock'n Roll* (referring to a rocking motion). This was part of making yoga an easy enterprise, suitable for every age group and good to combine with a daily routine. "That you can do while combing your hair," she appealed to her audience, "Why don't you practice this in your office or at home?" and "You could bend like this as well, for instance while you watch television."[51] It is not known how many spectators of *Yoga für Yeden* actually performed yoga postures during Kareen's program and even kept on exercising afterwards. Still the viewing rate and the sales of the corresponding book indicate the tremendous interest in following her suggestion: "Come down on the floor, this is easy, everybody can do it!"[52]

In retrospect one might criticize Kareen Zebroff's yoga instructions as naive, overly simplified, and embellished with stereotypes. Yet at the start of the 1970s yoga in Germany was still a socially contested practice, faced with reservations about it being a religious cult or, contrarily, mocking and sarcastic comments about "breath artists" (*Atemkünstler*), "crackpots" (*Spinner*), "soul seizers"

[48] Zebroff (1975, 10).

[49] Ibid., 7, my translation.

[50] German original: "Das ist zwar der typische Lotussitz, aber bitte, kein Angst haben! Sie brauchen ihn nicht zu machen, auch für [die nächsten] drei Jahre nicht. Kopfstehen und auf Nägelbetten liegen ist auch nichts für Sie. Das ist für Fakire" (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973).

[51] German original: "Das können Sie auch machen, während Sie ... sich vorwärts beugen beim Haarekämmen. ... Machen Sie's doch auch: im Büro, zuhause, ..." (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973). "So, auch Sie [sollten] sich so bewegen, zum Beispiel während Sie vor dem Fernseher sitzen" (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973).

[52] Yoga für Yeden 1973.

(*Seelenfänger*), and "flexible housewives" (*biegsame Hausfrauen*).[53] The professional association of yoga teachers in Germany BDY (initially: Berufsverband Deutscher Yogalehrer), founded in 1967, aimed to improve the general image of yoga.[54] With this objective, yoga was demystified and reframed as an integral, yet secularized mind-body technique. This "clean" form of posture practice could be commercialized as Hatha Yoga whereas any reference to a specific yoga tradition or teacher risked being stigmatized as a form of blind guru worship.[55] The issue of spiritual self-development was a difficult one, and thus, in mainstream teaching, beyond the scope of Hatha Yoga, For the same reason, the ZDF-producer had asked Kareen to pass over any philosophical meanings associated with yoga. This direction was in line with the policy on German adult education centers.[56] Besides a rising number of sports clubs, these adult education classes were the main venues for teaching and learning yoga in Germany, from approximately the late 1960s to the beginning 1990s.[57] Regarding the emphasis on fitness, safe stretching, and relaxation, the type of yoga on television was thus modeled after adult education classes and vice versa. However, as Christian Fuchs showed in his study, the attention given to meditation and spirituality in German yoga classes varied.[58] Several yoga teachers were probably active in both adult education centers as well as private institutes devoted to self-development in a more religious sense. At any rate, during this period the preferred location for practicing yoga was at home.

In this socio-historical context Hatha Yoga was conceived as a very gentle and soft practice with curative effects on lifestyle diseases. Accordingly, Kareen Zebroff argued that yoga exercises differed from mere gymnastics in that they revitalized the body rather than caused exhaustion or muscle fever. Movements should be deliberately slow any physical exertion should be avoided: "The secret of yoga is to stretch rather than to contract muscles like in a gymnastic exercise. The movements are [to be] slow and thoughtful in order to stop at the initial sign of pain which is the body's warning signal."[59] Hence she appealed during her television class not to struggle too hard. "Don't force yourself! Please never jerk and force your body, that would be anti-yoga! Lift [your foot] and put it on your thigh. Then

[53] See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 May 1970 and *Spiegel*, 27 January 1975.

[54] Fuchs (1990, 114–120). Meanwhile the BDY has been renamed Berufsverband der Yogalehrenden in Deutschland e.V.

[55] Fuchs (2006, 175–176) mentions German yoga instructors who in the course of their professional career felt the need to distance themselves from their teachers.

[56] Fuchs (1990, 204). According to Newcombe (2009, 994) the Physical Education (sic) department in London had similar requirements for yoga not being identified as cult.

[57] See Fuchs (1990, 197–208). A survey in 1988 among yoga teachers associated with the BDY revealed that 64 % offered yoga in adult education centers, 42 % in private yoga schools and only 9 % in sports clubs and studios (Fuchs 1990, 229). In 2006 the importance of the adult education sector had decreased: Only 40 % taught yoga there, 26 % offered classes in private yoga schools and 17 % in the sports clubs and fitness centers (see Weber 2007, 157).

[58] Fuchs (1990).

[59] My translation of Zebroff (1975, 10).

you lift [this] knee slightly, take your foot, press the [other] knee down, of course in the same gentle way."[60] She emphasized holding a posture only as long as it feels comfortable and warned against any exaggeration. "Now we do it again, very relaxed ... close your eyes and enjoy the exercise!"[61] This soft attitude towards the performance of a posture was considered the central quality of yoga, regardless that none of the exercises could be done without at least a minimum of muscular activity. One should carry out yoga postures very calmly and with kinesthetic pleasure. Hence Kareen motivated her audience by explaining that "yoga is not difficult because you proceed only as much as you can do easily."[62] This gentleness of yoga was also conveyed during yoga instructions broadcasted by radio. Anneliese Harf, for example, recommended: "Whenever we feel exhausted by a [yoga] exercise, we miss its meaning". "It is important to lovingly sense your lumbar spine and thus allow it to bend softly without any force ... There is a big difference which can be realized only by means of sensitive practice. Whenever pain occurs, we proceeded too fast and the pressure became too strong."[63] Regarding *Keep Up With Yoga*, aired by British television, Suzanne Newcombe identifies a very similar style of teaching yoga, here associated with the presenter Lyn Marshall: "So slowly, there is no hurry, lie back down—legs and feet together .... Now close your eyes .... Don't try to come up as far as I am. Just go to your own limit and stay there .... And now slowly let your head slide back. Don't rush. Just let the back sink down very gently. Now when you feel your back on the floor, just relax. Let your feet relax. Let your hands relax."[64] Clearly, yoga was defined in contrast to athletic exercise regimes and the crucial sign to distinguish was the sense of ease and relaxation associated with yoga instead of any kind of exertion, exhaustion, fast movement, or sensation of pain. Furthermore, yoga teachers of that time stressed the importance of deep relaxation at the end of each yoga session, employing methods ranging from autogenic training ("let your feet relax") to progressive muscle relaxation (the alternate tensing and relaxing of particular sets of muscles). For example, the December 1973 issue of *Yoga für Yeden* was devoted to various relaxation techniques.[65]

[60] German original: "Bitte nie zwingen im Yoga, nie rucken und zwingen, das ist Anti-Yoga. [Den Fuß] hochheben und auf den Schenkel legen. Dann kommt das Knie leicht hoch, der Fuß kommt vor, das Knie kommt runter und natürlich genauso sanft" (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973).

[61] German original: "Jetzt machen wir es noch einmal, ganz locker ... machen Sie die Augen zu und genießen es" (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973).

[62] German original: "Im Yoga geht man nur so weit, wie man es als individueller [Mensch] kann" (*Yoga für Yeden* 1973).

[63] German original: "Wann immer uns Übungen anstrengen, übersehen wir den Sinngehalt" (4 November 1978). "Wichtig ist, dass wir uns liebevoll in die Lendenwirbelsäule einleben und ihr ohne Zwang Gelegenheit geben, elastisch nachzugeben" (29 January 1979). "Hierin liegt ein großer Unterschied, der nur durch einfühlsames Üben bewußt werden kann. Wann immer Schmerz auftritt, sind wir zu weit gegangen und die Belastung ist zu groß" (11 June 1979).

[64] Newcombe 2008, 185, quoting *Keep Up With Yoga*, 5 September 1977.

[65] On the origin of relaxation practices in nineteenth- and twentieth-century proprioceptive theory see Singleton (2005).

In comparison to Bikram Yoga, the tutorial emphasis on softness preferred by Kareen Zebroff and others appears feminized, and indeed the rising popularity of yoga in 1970s Germany can be attributed to women who constituted approximately 80 % of all practitioners.[66] This feminine aspect of yoga was further enhanced through its association with dietary requirements (healthy nutrition) and by means of advertising yoga in mass media as a system of raising attractiveness, youthfulness, and beauty.[67] However, the concept of yoga as a particularly soft and gentle system of relaxation emerged during the post-war period and still continues dominating large strands of yoga discourse. In German speaking countries this attitude has been significantly influenced by Selvarajan Yesudian (1916–1998), a medical student from South India, who together with the Hungarian artist Elisabeth Haich had founded a yoga school in Zurich in 1949 and later at other Swiss locations.[68] Yesudian's approach to *Yoga and Health* is well known through a book of the same name.[69] He promoted a set of 25 postures and ten breathing exercises. What is more, during the years of teaching yoga in Switzerland, he developed and standardized a particular mode of teaching and performing yoga postures: instructions were to be given in a soft voice; an *āsana* had to be performed without physical pressure; it should be held with closed eyes in order to concentrate on breathing and focus inwards to raise awareness. Furthermore, a yoga class was to be concluded by deep relaxation through affirmation and guided imagery. As far as possible these conditions should also accompany the regular performance of yoga exercises at home.[70] Although Hatha Yoga by Yesudian was largely a spiritual

[66] Fuchs (1990, 201). Following Tietke (2007, 77) the percentage of female practitioners seems to be consistent.

[67] The feminizing of Hatha Yoga can be traced back to Indra Devi (née Eugenie Petersen) who in Devi 1954 explicitly promoted yoga as a technique suitable for women to stay *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, published in New York. Following Singleton (2010, 150) some yoga postures were already incorporated in British women's gymnastics during the 1930s by Mary (Mollie) Bagot Stack who herself never referred to it as yoga. On excessive hopes in yoga as beauty and youth elixir see also Newcombe's contribution in this book.

[68] According to Kareen Zebroff her favorite source book was Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* (1966). The format of this publication must have indeed been tempting. The book explains more than 200 yoga exercises, describing all intermediate stages to reach the final pose with a total number of 602 illustrations. In the printed companion to *Yoga für Yeden*, however, Kareen gave only the very basic information, often with bullet points. Clearly, she did not teach Iyengar Yoga despite being inspired by this perspective on posture performance.

[69] The German edition *Sport und Yoga* was published in 1949, the Hungarian original dates 1941. Following Fuchs (1990, 96, 2006, 173) *Yoga and Health* is probably the worldwide top-selling book on yoga. Although the publication is co-authored by Haich, Yesudian acts as first person narrator.

[70] See Fuchs (1990, 96); www.yesudianyoga.ch (accessed 15 January 2012). At any rate, Yesudian's book still carries traits of an earlier perspective on yoga (Yesudian and Haich 1949) that echo nationalist body ideals in India. He addressed primarily men, praised the muscular body, and suggested practicing yoga almost naked in front of a mirror (ibid., 249, 259). Female concerns were mentioned only in passing (for instance, on pages 204, 214, 231) and—surprisingly, given his later spiritual overtone—regards the prevention of wrinkles, menstruation disorder, and obesity.

rather than fitness-oriented program—and therefore also included regular lectures on yoga philosophy—it not only shaped the dissemination and development of Hatha Yoga but also created a tutorial style that became normative for yoga classes in the adult education sector and therapeutic contexts in Germany and elsewhere.[71]

In general, the importance given to relaxation techniques has been a rather recent addition to Hatha Yoga, and goes back to Anglo-American and European developments in the 1920s.[72] During this period, psychosomatic techniques such as progressive relaxation (following Edmund Jacobson), autosuggestion and mental healing (inspired by Émile Coué), rotation of awareness (as in proprioceptive therapy), as well as guided imagery and visualization (practiced by Jungian psychologists) were promoted and gradually associated with yoga. Following Singleton these relaxation techniques were combined with deep breathing and gentle ways of stretching the body, both already popular in the realm of "harmonial gymnastics" developed between the world wars. However, the emphasis on relaxation also entered strands of the Indian yoga revival. In Vishnudevananda's writings on Sivananda Yoga in the 1950s, Singleton locates several influences from relaxation theories although without respective reference.[73]

Conclusions: Language in the Transcultural Circulation of Yoga

In academic debates and medico-scientific research on the global circulation of Hatha Yoga the role and impact of speech patterns in yoga tutorials is hardly mentioned. As it stands, language use seems merely to be an indicator that assesses whether one form of yoga is considered a sophisticated representation (claiming to convey the complexities of Indian thought) or rather a mundane simplification, framed as a popular keep-fit practice. Although the influence of renowned individuals and their rhetorical figures in shaping the multidirectional flows that constitute modern yoga has been rightly acknowledged recently,[74] one major

[71] Yoga instructors in post-war Germany were not only influenced by Yesudian and Haich's yoga school in Zurich, but also by the teachings of Sivananda (see Fuchs 1990). Particular soft forms of Hatha Yoga often emphasize meditation and the chanting of hymns (*mantra*). Kundalini Yoga for instance, a type of yoga developed within the realm of the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization, should raise neither muscle fever nor backache. Extensive stretches, twists, splits, or the headstand are to be avoided. Teachers should adjust to the students' bodily condition (see Laue 2006, 29–34).

[72] Singleton (2005, 2010); on the influence of mesmerism, New Thought, and psychotherapy on notions of meditation and yoga see also Baier (2009).

[73] Singleton (2005, 295).

[74] For the debate about Vivekananda's influence on yoga see, e.g., De Michelis (2004), Singleton (2010, Chap. 9) discussed the role of Krishnamacharya in shaping the image of postural yoga. On the translation of Asian concepts into English and their result on the identity of religious movements see Aravamudan (2007).

cognitive device to grasp and codify the somatic sensations of posture practice seems to have escaped critical reconsideration: spoken language in yoga tuition. Whereas claims regarding physiological and biochemical benefits of yoga exercises, as well as their effects on the human being (perceptive faculty, cognitive and psychomotor functions), are beyond the methodological possibilities of the humanities and social sciences, there are indeed theories on the impact of language in the social construction of reality, applicable to the transnational production of yoga cultures. The aim of this chapter was to show that this strand of theorizing, and the concept of language performativity in particular, opens up new analytical space in modern yoga research to recognize the importance of verbal tuition and to invite rethinking its impact on the circulation and diversification of bodily practice. Although performance theory cannot "prove" how tutorials influence the experience of yoga practitioners, it certainly is helpful to recognize when and how differing speech patterns and semantic preferences arise, overlap, compete, and disappear, and hence influence the assessment of corporeal practice and, as a consequence, the process of meaning production. This kind of analysis allows conclusions about the impact of verbal conventions on the respective communities of yoga practitioners and their socio-cultural notions of well-being, their self, and bodily health. However, the present investigation resulted from a pilot study only. It identified and reflected on particular sets of phrases and indicated in what respect yoga tuition has the capacity to evoke specific, discursively shaped somatic experiences, i.e., regarding the practitioners' assessment of their body, personal limits, and the evaluation of pain. Although Bikram Yoga and *Yoga für Yeden* stimulate the cardiovascular system in contrasting ways, this socio-cultural impact should not be underestimated. It goes without saying that any further conclusions on the experience of yogic exercise should also take account of its wider social context and the response and self-reflection of yoga practitioners.

Language as a medium of instruction gained its present significance only in the course of the twentieth century. What used to be transmitted largely by mimesis in a life-long relationship between guru and adept was gradually communicated in new forms, shaped by the spread of print, photography, and changing institutional structures. Hence the development of postural yoga is inherently linked to modern modes of learning and teaching, not least to groups of people in classes that have a defined beginning and end. In this context, it became important to verbalize why and how to perform an exercise correctly, and also its further implications. Regarding the transcultural dissemination of yoga, the tutorial essentially serves to convince newcomers about the significance of posture practice in terms that correspond to their frame of reference, and possibly with the aid of further elements that substantiate this understanding. This applies equally for Hindus who in 1920s India promoted the medicalization of yoga to resist the degeneracy associated with modern (colonial) life, for Indian gurus who spread yoga in the United States, and for Western seekers turned into yoga celebrities addressing a global audience. Language constitutes the major cognitive device to anticipate, frame, and rationalize somatic experience in a variety of yoga cultures, whether exclusivist or mainstream at a particular time and place. In this chapter this was shown taking the

example of two highly standardized forms of yoga tutorials that in regard to their uniformity can be considered exceptional. In these cases, habitual language use constituted an important factor in shaping yogic experience. Beyond a doubt, the impact of speech patterns on the introduction and translation of yoga to new audiences is of similar importance in cases of less standardized tutorials that characterize the vast range of yoga traditions.[75] However, although a group class with verbal instructions is normative today, it is not mandatory. Mimi Nichter observed how travelers who aimed to learn Ashtanga Yoga in Mysore were often troubled by the fact that this type of yoga class was not guided by a tutorial. Rather, everybody followed his or her own posture practice merely in the presence of an experienced teacher who only occasionally rectified the individual performance of a posture.[76]

Although based on largely overlapping sets of postures,[77] the two case studies clearly show that there are contrasting attitudes to Hatha Yoga as a method to achieve and maintain a healthy body. This difference concerns the assessment of bodily activity and painful stimuli. On one hand, these examples reflect two competing yoga ideologies, if not approaches in pain ontology: the elementary, gentle, and feminized paradigm, in line with Kareen Zebroff's instructions, and, contrarily, the demanding, vigorous, and manly version, here exemplified by Bikram Choudhury. Whereas in the first case well-being is conceptualized as a result of slowing down and avoiding strenuous action to create a pleasurable body experience while doing yoga, in the latter case well-being is acknowledged as a consequence of giving maximum effort and what has been described as cathartic effect.[78] At any rate, both approaches constitute extremes in mapping the wide field of modern postural yoga with schools differing in their accessibility and choice for difficult postures, as well as in their balance of physical exercises, relaxation, and meditative elements.

On the other hand, the comparison of these teaching styles also points to two distinct periods of yoga's globalization. Considering habitual language use in yoga classes clearly shows how common phrases and speech patterns reflect the zeitgeist. What makes yoga a fashionable, valued, and healthy practice also varies over the course of time. During the 1970s, Hatha Yoga in the West emerged from an exclusivist subcultural movement into a mainstream activity framed as a self-help method for coping with the side effects of a modern life style, whether to regenerate the body from sedentary jobs or to meet excessive beauty standards. At this time, yoga was still perceived as being mysterious and accessible only after being

[75] One could also consider the impact of tuition in the case of "modern meditational yoga" (De Michelis 2004), i.e., yoga traditions that emphasize mental rather than physical exercise.

[76] Nichter (Chapter "The social life of yoga: Exploring Transcultural Flows in India").

[77] Both curricula include triangle pose, eagle pose, bow pose, cobra pose, locust pose, camel pose, standing forward bend, seated forward bend, spinal twist, and corpse pose.

[78] Significantly in sports medicine there is no agreement on either the benefits of stretching to the point of pain, nor its use as a method to enhance human performance and flexibility (Albert and Meyer 2005, Chap. 3).

explicitly translated for Western aspirations. Yoga was a "foreign tradition" that called for adjustment to occidentals (*Abendländer*). When the current yoga boom started spreading from North America at the end of the 1990s, postural yoga was marketed as a universal mind-body practice with various styles, still incorporating "Indian wisdom," yet framed as a technique that is learned and taught worldwide in a similar fashion. Bikram Yoga exemplifies this approach, last but not least due to a franchise system on the basis of a copyrighted combination of verbal instructions and classroom conditions. In this period, yoga came with the promise of perfecting the mind/body and to help balance the self in a constantly changing transient world. In this way Bikram Yoga classes emphasize the development of self-awareness and self-care, but also of endurance and flexibility as liberating. Following Verena Schnäbele, the combination of these skills indeed helps to succeed in a labor market structured by economic liberalization, i.e., in settings with rising demands regards working hours, self-organization, and geographical mobility.[79] To clarify: I do not argue for a clear-cut boundary between attitudes to Hatha Yoga in the 1970s and since the turn of the millennium. Yet I would claim that the present transnational popularity of postural yoga is also related to this new image and emphasis associated with dynamic and rather vigorous types of yoga, whether newly branded (e.g., Power Yoga) or long-term yoga traditions reaching a wider audience (in case of Iyengar Yoga). In this process, the notion of Hatha Yoga as a method to transcend personal limits by means of vigorous endeavor is both contested and tempting.

To train focus and willpower, to give maximum effort, and to achieve extraordinary flexibility appears like a formula suitable for improving the self on several levels. Similarly, Bikram Yoga pushes not only physical limits but also aims to widen the experiential horizon.[80] Reaching goals, which had seemed unattainable for a long time, becomes a realistic challenge for those who succeeded in their self-discipline. Unlike in earlier periods of yoga's dissemination in the West, this expansion of personal limits is rarely conceptualized as a spiritual program but framed within the health discourse: it serves to "balance" not only work and life, but first of all mind and body. Whereas in 1970s Germany the focus on self-development by means of yoga was still considered beyond mainstream acceptance and likely to be stigmatized as its dubious religious Other, the recent emphasis on willpower in order to achieve some sort of perfection has been subsumed as health behavior. It nourishes the vision of an individual being both in control of her/his life and extremely flexible in all respects. The trope of exerting and refining oneself emerged in yoga discourse long before its commercialization as a global mind-body practice. The goal of human perfectibility has a long history on the Indian subcontinent, transmitted in Sanskrit sources on yoga and related subjects, and in tantric

[79] See Schnäbele (2009, Chap. 9) and "The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace".

[80] Seen thusly, yoga may raise self-confidence and the subjective feeling of empowerment (see Nevrin 2008).

haṭhayoga (see footnote 1) in particular.[81] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore its representations in Indic discourses through time and place, yet discipline and control were probably regarded as instrumental throughout. The Indologist Frits Staal has put the point concisely: "yoga is not for relaxation; rather the opposite: it is meant to increase 'restraint of control' (yoga)."[82] This notion achieved a modern incarnation in the first of half of the twentieth century when in India yoga postures were rediscovered as a tool to enhance physical strength.[83] Like their contemporaries, Bishnu Ghosh and Selvaranjan Yesudian idealized the muscular (male) body, yet influenced their successors in quite diverse ways, as the approach to yoga by Bikram Choudhury and, by comparison, Kareen Zebroff has shown.[84] Moreover, in regard to this particular timeline, the arduous form of Bikram Yoga seems to link in more closely with the Indian tradition in the 1920s than any gentle way of posture performance. This is not to make any claims of authenticity, since both "gentle" and "vigorous" types of modern yoga are cultural hybrids. Rather, I wish to stress the ironies and turns in the transcultural dissemination of various kinds of yoga where Hindu notions of increasing "restraint of control" meet a Western approach such as "no pain, no gain" and compete with esoteric ideas and visions of the nature of "true" Indian yoga.

Furthermore, the exploration of language use in yoga tutorials and the reconsideration of Hatha Yoga as a context-dependent exercise system also have an impact on the conceptualization of transcultural flows. Whereas particular ways of breathing, posture practice, and bodily activity in general may circulate across cultural boundaries, the issues raised in this chapter strongly suggest that their experiences resist translation. Rather, somatic meaning is shaped through and by means of the "socially informed body" (Pierre Bourdieu), and hence influenced by contingent factors and the present environment rather than any appropriated significance for somebody else.[85] Embodied experience has a fundamentally socio-cultural character and varies along with it collective and personal memory. The corporeal encounter of yoga is thus shaped by the living conditions, values, and structures in the community of practice. Moreover, in the context of transcultural flows, the human body serves as a source of creative misunderstanding: it may incite the production of new meanings altogether. Seen thusly, bodily practice—and its twin: embodied knowledge—constitute an epistemic entity that differs in its capacity to be

[81] Coward (2008, 103), for more details on the perfectibility of human nature in Indian philosophy and in Hinduism see Chap. 6 and 7 in Coward's study.

[82] Staal (1993, 71), compare Birch (2011).

[83] See introduction.

[84] For Yesudian's praise of the beautiful muscular body see Yesudian and Haich (1949, 249, 259); for Bishnu Ghosh's view see Singleton (2010, 133) and Guggenbühl (2008, 3) who also noticed that Yesudian must have been familiar with muscle control. Even Paramahansa Yogananda, who later became far better known for his spiritual teaching, caught the attention of his American audience by the display of muscle mastery on stage in the 1920s (Singleton 2010, 132–133); see also footnote 14.

[85] Bourdieu (1977, 124). On the notion of embodiment in social anthropology see Csordas (1994).

translated across distant social environments from the global circulation of cognitive knowledge. What yoga is and does depends on the expectation of practitioners, which is not a sign of degeneration but an inherent feature of a traveling physical activity.

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The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace

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Abstract In this article posture-based yoga practice will be discussed as a contingent social construct which has evolved as a type of bodywork that answers specific needs of contemporary yoga practitioners. I shall focus on yoga practice in present-day Germany. The prevalent form of physical, posture-based yoga associated with Hatha Yoga will be discussed in sociological terms and related to needs that arise due to the post-Fordist deregulation of work. To cope with these work conditions a demand for more flexibility, fitness, and expression management arises to be met by postural yoga. I shall analyze some aspects and effects of current "yoga bodywork." This analysis results in the thesis that today's predominant form of yoga creates an "inside" perspective of a productive "useful body" that stands in contrast to the "outside" perspective that consumer society has on the physical body—being a place of consumption and aesthetical appearance.

Introduction

The common yoga practice in Germany at the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century (hereafter referred to as "contemporary yoga") mainly consists of sequences of body postures (*āsana*), a few breathing exercises, and a relaxation phase lying down. Such postural yoga is mostly taught in group classes. The exercises are adapted to the participants' physical conditions and abilities. A yoga class takes about one and a half hours. This form of group class is so widespread that—regardless of the history of yoga—one could conclude that yoga (at least) in Germany is a form of bodywork. In this article, this predominant form of yoga will be discussed as being a contingent social construct that has been adapted and modified by contemporary yoga practitioners to fulfill their specific needs, and to

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respect their specific work and living conditions. Based hereupon, some examples of the effects of current "yoga bodywork" will be presented.

My previous sociological research on posture-based yoga has shown that this practice influences the physical as well as the mental, emotional, and social well-being of practitioners.[1] Analyzing yoga practice from the standpoint of a sociologist requires a conceptualization of body and mind, especially that of the interaction of body and mind. How can a physical posture class influence a person's social well-being? The concepts of the human body-mind nexus which sociologists have developed can be traced back to the roots of occidental philosophy: Plato and later Aristotle postulated interactions between body, soul, and mind. While Aristotle's perception on discursive knowledge was that it was gained through (physical) sensory perceptions, through the whole body as a unity, Descartes' claim of the fundamental mind-body dichotomy lead to a fundamental shift. A dualistic perception of human existence developed since then.[2] The worldview of the dualism of consciousness and body being a part of matter that obeys the laws of physics has become hegemonic. It stems from Descartes' methodological skepticism, which states that the only certain knowledge is that of your own consciousness. Consciousness undoubtedly exists since it is the starting point for any mental activity. Furthermore, Descartes promoted the instrumental use of the human body in occidental culture by introducing the perception of one's own body as an object and that of consciousness as a subject.

Descartes' theory of a basic dichotomy has become dominant, not only in sociological theory. Classical sociology has so far hardly developed any procedural ideas of the body, but remains attached to the body-mind duality in most cases.[3] This separation often leads to a blind spot for body issues; the body is simply not classified as a social entity by itself.[4] Sociality is primarily located in consciousness, in the subjects' perceptions, knowledge bases, and patterns of interaction. Generally, sociological interest focuses on the mind (consciousness) that presumably characterizes man as a social being. Referring to this, Shilling talks about the disembodied perspective of classical sociology.[5] The body appears as a pre-social object, raw material so to speak, which sociology therefore loses sight of. The function of the body is seen in the biological naturalness that places consciousness in space and time. If at all, the body contributes to the subject's social existence by displaying social factors such as age or gender (a concept which has been challenged for some time by gender studies).[6]

In contemporary sociological theory and research specifically, the human body is mostly addressed with regard to its representations, interactions, and social uses.[7] Post-structuralist theory rejects the seeming naturalness of bodies and the claims to

[1] Schnäbele (2010).

[2] Ibid. 124.

[3] For further discussion of the sociology of the body see ibid., 123–132.

[4] E.g. Durkheim (1999 [1895]).

[5] Shilling (1993, 8). For a critique of Shilling's observation see Waskul and Vannini (2006).

[6] For a gender studies perspective on the body see Butler (1999).

[7] Malacrida and Low (2008) and Waskul and Vannini (2006).

power that legitimize themselves through presumably biological, therefore natural, differences. Opposing the idea of a "natural body," post-structuralist theory conceptualizes the body instead as a space for and an effect of textual, discursive references and social constructions.[8] Another influential approach is that of Pierre Bourdieu. He makes reference to the body within the context of social interactions, insofar as it is conceived as a carrier of social capital.[9] Yet Bourdieu presents the body as only a carrier not a sentient agent. However, Barbalet and Lyon, even if only in consumerist terms, consider the body's sentient dimension.[10] This construct of a consuming body will later in this chapter be discussed with regard to what I call the "useful body."

When addressing the effects of postural yoga practice, I argue that the body has to be seen not only as a social but also as a sentient body that transfers knowledge to the mind. It has to be conceptualized, following Aristotle, as an agent that creates knowledge through the sense organs.[11] The body is more than just physical substance, more than just a carrier of capital, even. Based on my previous discussion elsewhere, I shall conceptualize the relationship between body and consciousness as a procedural entity which exists beyond but not independently of discursive thinking.[12] This body-mind nexus is transformed through yoga practice. The body, in close interaction with mental processes, becomes, I argue, more efficient and useful for the yoga practitioner.[13] I shall further discuss the social implications of this effect of posture-based yoga practice.

Yoga: A Contingent Social Construct

Following Fuchs, the Sanskrit term *yoga* derives from the verbal root *yuj*, literally "to yoke." "Yoga" initially alluded to yoking draft animals in front of a wagon. Over time, two main meanings developed from this.[14] Firstly, yoga became a term for "conjunction" or "unit." This meaning is derived from the fact that several draft animals are yoked in front of a wagon. Secondly, the word yoga came to signify "control" and "discipline," derived from the command which the yoke had of the draft animals. Hence the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali in its second verse states: "Yoga is the cessation of the turnings of thought" (*Sūtra* I 2).[15] The achievement of such a unified, controlled state of mind requires discipline and focus. In this respect

[8] Csordas (1994, 12) and Butler (1999).

[9] Bourdieu (1984), Bourdieu (1998), and Bourdieu et al. (1999).

[10] Barbalet and Lyon (1994, 52).

[11] For an extensive discussion see Schnäbele (2010).

[12] See Ibid., 123–158.

[13] Especially moments of inner silence, moments of meditation, when discursive thinking comes to a halt, have been identified as having a transformative potential (see Schnäbele 2010, 154–158).

[14] Fuchs (1990, 11).

[15] Miller (1998, 29).

"classical yoga" fundamentally is a mental effort and a state of mind, or rather a state of consciousness as yoga does not only address the rational mind but also emotions, memory, and subconscious patterns. At the same time *yoga* signifies the various techniques which lead to that state, as described in the *Yogasūtra* or in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad*. Patañjali and other classical texts mention for example breathing techniques (*prāṇāyāma*) which facilitate slowing down mental activity. However, the present-day yoga scene in its diverse expressions has to be distinguished from the scripture-based definitions of 'yoga'.[16] Contemporary yoga is a highly plurivalent and transient social practice including a multitude of activities such as the predominant fitness-oriented, posture-based group classes, but also including religious worship, diet regimens, chanting groups, meditation classes, and individual therapeutic practices for clients dealing with life-threatening illnesses. Considering this long, incomplete and constantly changing list, any definition of what counts as yoga practice is at best an approximation.

In the course of history, yoga has again and again experienced modifications and extensions influenced by other traditions which lead to what we observe today as contemporary yoga. One significant wave of modifications can be traced back to Tantrism when further postures and techniques were introduced, created, and integrated in what came to be known as *haṭhayoga*.[17] Similarly, related practices were abandoned or adapted. This process stretched over a longer period of time and resulted in a new understanding of yoga, which Joseph Alter contrasts with the classical era as follows:

> On the one hand, the *Yoga Sūtra* has very little to say about *āsanas* and, on the other, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* is about *āsanas* and *prānāyāma* and very little else.[18]

When comparing the *haṭhayoga* texts with the *Yogasūtra*, the *Bhagavādgītā* and the *Upaniṣad*, one finds that early classical yoga hardly refers to the physical practices mentioned in regard to *haṭhayoga*. In classical yoga, achieving a state of knowledge—of harmony with the self—was by no means connected to sophisticated cleansing and strengthening exercises. Quite the opposite: *Haṭhayoga* newly introduces these techniques and establishes them over the centuries while at the same time proclaiming the "eternal tradition of yoga."

Yoga practice has undergone significant changes not only during Tantrism but maybe even more so during the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. *Prāṇāyāma,* mental practices and cleansing techniques, crucial parts of *haṭhayoga*, shifted more and more to the background and made room for an extensive *āsana* practice. A type of yoga developed which was very much focused on fitness, health, and gymnastics, a type of yoga that cannot be found anywhere in the older yoga scriptures.[19] Whereas in *haṭhayoga* the body was mainly used for soteriological purposes, in contemporary yoga the body is trained to be more

[16] See Hauser's Introduction: Transcultural yoga(s). Analyzing a Traveling Subject.

[17] Eliade (2009, 200) and Sjoman (1999 [1996]).

[18] Alter (2004, 20).

[19] Sjoman (1999 [1996]), Alter (2004), and Singleton (2010).

flexible and useful (which does not imply that contemporary yoga has no spiritual purpose at all, however the physical posture practice is first and foremost conceived as means to train the body). Mark Singleton suggests that certain European and American body cultures, such as bodybuilding and women's gymnastics, strongly influenced what, during the twentieth century, became, and still is considered, yoga. Following Singleton new variations of poses were invented, but also new groups of poses, e.g. standing poses.[20] At any rate, the current academic discourse on the history and continuity of yoga is quite lively, and thus it is problematic to talk about a yoga tradition as such.

The popular notion of a "yoga tradition" is often used to suggest or claim a somehow consistent transfer of knowledge over time. Based on Alter's position, here "tradition" will be looked at as a contingent, inconsistent transfer of knowledge which is subject to diverse historical influences. Alter critically distances from the stylization of yoga as an original timeless practice, and emphasizes the historical situation of the practice:

> The problem ... is that Yoga, even more so than religion and science ... is constructed as both timeless and beyond time. And so it is all the more important to situate it in history as a product of human imagination.[21]

Alter analyzes yoga as a social construct and contingent cultural practice which was created from socio-historical conditions that changed it again and again. Consequently, when talking about tradition, this shall not evoke the association of a seamless continuity, but designate the genealogy of today's postural yoga. In social practice though, yoga is oftentimes presented as being eternal, a kind of holy practice beyond time, for instance on the website of a yoga studio:

> Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga became a very hip and trendy style of yoga during the past 20 years. But it is also a very old yoga path with a tradition reaching centuries back. Indeed, the practice of Ashtanga Yoga has most probably remained the same for thousands of years in the form that we still follow today.[22]

Yoga is discursively constituted as "eternal" and thereby valid.[23] In their teachings, today's yoga instructors often refer to the classical texts, especially the *Upaniṣad*, the *Bhagavādgītā,* or the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, which allegedly convey "true" knowledge. However, it would be both misleading and inexpedient to draw on a canon of authoritative texts as a means of comparison for rating certain yoga practices as being "authentic," since each of these texts again was the result of a certain historic figuration.[24] None of the above mentioned texts can provide a supra-historical truth that could serve as proof of the authenticity of yoga, especially because these scriptures themselves do not form only one consistent yoga

[20] Ibid., 161.

[21] Alter (2004, 5).

[22] URL: http://ashtangayoga.info/ashtanga-yoga/power-yoga.html (accessed 22 December 2009). See also Nichter (this volume).

[23] Schnäbele (2010, 47–52).

[24] Alter (2004, 18).

discourse.[25] Apart from authoritative texts, "true masters" who would have conveyed knowledge centuries old are quoted, but there is no traceable line of masters in yoga that could be traced back several centuries.[26] The construction of a continuing tradition having existed virtually unchanged for thousands of years and being legitimized by a master in the Himalayas, may very well be a powerful rhetoric image on various levels but it conflicts with current findings and evidence about the historical reality of yoga tradition which, again and again, has been and still is characterized by ruptures and the assimilation of various influences.[27]

As a result of the current research on the history of yoga, it is safe to conclude that yoga, as it is practiced widely these days, is mostly (even though not exclusively) a fitness-oriented system that has been shaped over the last 150 years. Contemporary posture-based yoga resulted from a new emphasis on physical culture in the twentieth century, a development that continues. Today, health, fitness, and wellness are widely discussed. Self-help books on diet, gymnastics, yoga, pilates, or other fitness regimens are very popular. Politically, this is supported by a strong emphasis on individual responsibility and preventive healthcare. Yoga practice must be seen as a part of the broader political scope of individualized health- and self-care, yoga bodywork being a part of this personal prevention program and fundamentally a requirement of modern society.[28] Not surprisingly, yoga became popular during the second half of the twentieth century, parallel to the rise of specific work and life conditions.

Socio-Historical Background of Contemporary Yoga Practice

Contemporary postural yoga is practiced mainly by the middle class in urban areas of Europe, North America, Australia, if not worldwide. This urban social group is characterized by an above average level of education, and work in the increasingly delimited, immaterial knowledge work sector, as well as in the affective work sector.[29] In recent decades, these professionals have been confronted with growing behavioral demands regarding their personal performance and efficacy while facing

[25] Ibid., 15.

[26] For a serious discussion of the yoga "tradition" in a popular magazine see Anne Cushman's article "New Light on Yoga" in the *Yoga Journal* 1999 (http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/466_1.cfm) (accessed 22 December 2009).

[27] Singleton (2010).

[28] De Michelis (2005), Schnäbele (2010), Singleton (2010), and Strauss (2005).

[29] On the educational status of yoga practitioners see Fuchs (1990) and Strauss (2005). Immaterial work encompasses the service sector, information technology, media, engineering, and many other knowledge based sectors in which a specific corpus of knowledge is required. Often academic training is compulsory to work in these areas. It is rarely manual work, but mostly mental work. Affective work is mainly found in the service sector, in healthcare, customer services, social work,

an increased density of work, as well as the gradual delimitation of their working hours. These changes in the work sector can be attributed to the general shift from Fordist production to post-Fordist forms of work (and production): The term post-Fordism describes the dominant economic system of the Fordian model of standardization and administration being replaced by flexible, deregulated work; a gradual change since the early 1980s.[30] Especially the discourses on flexibilization, competition, and fragmentation of employment relations create fragmented subjectivations of constant adjustments to changing work and thus also life conditions. The post-Fordist discourse requires significantly more flexibility of the subjects. Under these demands, an increasing amount of employees regard yoga as an adequate form of recreation. There are clear parallels: The flexibility required on the employment market is practiced in yoga.

Especially the industries of immaterial production and affective social work, in which many yoga practitioners work, are characterized by processes of deregulation and flexibilization of the organization of work. One essential element is the implementation of flexible working hours.[31] For example, part time work can rarely be managed within the prescribed "part time." Insofar, additional work on a "voluntary" basis is required and expected. The situation is similar in industries such as advertising, information technology or media, forms of self-employment, social work, and other areas of emotional work. More flexible working hours tend to blur the difference between work and non-work, between employment and pastime. The direct consequence is the consistent limitation of regeneration or reproduction time which results in higher stress levels. Furthermore, in delimited work arrangements when it is unclear where work ends and pastime begins, a professional attitude has to be maintained at all times. Especially in the service sector, physical expression, appearance, and attitude have to be managed and manipulated. The prescribed smile of employees in the service industry is one of the most striking examples. As Strauss has pointed out, "[m]aintaining cheerful, calm, competent appearances can be extremely stressful, and so a need to develop stress-reducing strategies becomes critical, not only for optimal enjoyment of life, but simply to keep one's job."[32] Personal appearance in public, hitherto private time and finally the personality of employees are increasingly monopolized. The post-Fordist, subject-focused understanding of work requires employees not only to execute given tasks, but also to dedicate all their skills, creativity, "energy," and personality. Employment has been taken out of the discursive context of economy and its function of securing one's livelihood. Gradually it has shifted into the context of "self-expression" and the satisfaction of unfolding one's own abilities.

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teaching, etc. Emotional work requires a seemingly natural friendliness towards customers or clients. Emotional availability is expected and an integrative part of many professions.

[30] Schnäbele (2010).

[31] On the change in employment contracts and work conditions see: Möller (2000), Negri et al. (1998), Schnäbele (2010), Sennett (1998), and Voß (1994, 1998).

[32] Strauss (2005, 72).

This shift is also reflected in the way work is regulated, in the changed work demands. Employees now also have to carry financial risks and responsibilities as employees within the realm of a company, which only self-employed people had to take before. One example is the fact that work is increasingly organized in teams or projects without direct instructions by supervisors. At the same time, teams and all people involved are responsible for the results of their work. Management passes on the economic risks to team or project members who are lower on the hierarchy. Such arrangements typically include the liberty to determine one's own working hours, but the workload is so high that this does not result in an advantage for the employees, but that they possibly have to sacrifice part of their free time. Professionals are expected to work extensively while at the same time seeing their work as a personal fulfillment. So-called target arrangements support the obligation to exploit oneself. The difference between voluntariness and obligation is opaque in this area of conflict of demands and expectations, which might also be the reason for one's own positioning not being precise. When one's own and others' interests can no longer be distinguished, the confidence manifesting in one's body perception is blurred. On this background, yoga practitioners work out a bit of clarity for themselves by listening to the interests of the body on a physical level, by experiencing and mapping limits (as discussed later in this article), by separating themselves from behavioral demands. Gorz describes the post-Fordism necessity to access the whole person as follows:

> When the communicative, relationship-intensive, cooperative and discovery skills become part of the workforce, they can, naturally, not be commanded any longer, insofar as they presume the autonomy of the subject. They don't unfold on command, but as a result of the subject's initiative or not at all. The power of the capital can then no longer directly be applied on living work through hierarchical pressure, but only in an indirect manner. It has to move to areas above and beyond the company and has to condition the subject in a way that he or she accepts or chooses exactly what you want to force upon him or her. In this case, the company and the place of employment stop being the most significant place of the main conflict. The front will then go along everywhere where information, language, way of life, taste and trends are created and shaped by capital, trade, state or media. In other words, everywhere where the individuals' subjectivity or "identity," their values, their self-images or those of the world are continuously structured, fabricated and formed.[33]

The voluntariness of dedicating your entire personality to the work process is established in forms of more or less subtle enforcement, including the necessity to market your own work power and person. "[The new] worker who has become social [is] independent and able . . . to organize both [his] own effort and relationship to other activities," as Lazzarato recognizes.[34] This new ideal type of employee thus does not only have to organize his own work, but himself as well. Employees increasingly have to market themselves. Higher volatility of work arrangements implies that marketing oneself becomes crucial to build a career and avoid unemployment.[35] The "worker entrepreneur" is therefore increasingly constituted by the

[33] Translation V.S., Gorz (2000, 61–62).

[34] Translation V.S., Lazzarato (1998, 49).

[35] Voß (1998).

request for self-control and self-economization rather than company control of his work.[36] Skills have to be developed "voluntarily" with the aim of economically using them. The distinction between one's professional profile and one's personality is slowly disappearing, as the whole personality is valued first and foremost in its economic applicability. Subjectivity thus becomes the key category of the immaterial service sector work.[37] Subjectivity not only includes personality, knowledge, and soft skills, but also peoples' physicalities. Bodies have to appear capable, strong, flexible, and aesthetic, a reflection of the productivity the employees offer. They have to function and merge with the corporate identity behind the mask of a smile. The ideal body is invisible in its perfect applicability. Furthermore, these professionals are confronted with higher expectations towards their own appearance management: A display of happiness and positive attitude is mandatory. In this context, yoga practice among other reasons is a very popular coping strategy as it trains practitioners to maintain a cheerful calm attitude (even) under difficult circumstances.

The increasing behavioral demands as a consequence of flexibilization and reorganization of work relations manifest in the body, as they do not correspond to the body's own needs. It is thus not a coincidence that Strauss sees a connection between the popularity of body-focused yoga and the increasing behavioral demands of workers.[38] Neither is it surprising that De Michelis refers to the urban lifestyle, which causes stress, as a significant reason for the popularity of yoga.[39] Accordingly the spread of the *āsana*-based yoga classes began among the urban middle-class populations in the world, whether in Los Angeles, London, Hamburg, or Sydney. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, these populations suffer from employment conditions that they consider to be stressful and are looking for balancing strategies. Yoga is praised as a relaxing, healthy body technique and therefore becomes more and more popular with the spread of delimited knowledge-sector work. This is especially true for people working in the care sector as well as in the information technology, media, and advertising industries.[40] It is very obvious that this is not a trend affecting a small number of employees.

Another important factor is that yoga contributes to the fitness of those practicing it. Since physical fitness is also associated with aesthetics and health, this area is very important for most yoga practitioners. In the context of today's capitalistic society focused on gainful work, fitness is part of preventive health. Looking healthy is equated with being healthy, and being in charge of one's own health is one of the modern values through which people in the United States and

[36] Ibid.

[37] Möller (2000).

[38] Strauss (2005).

[39] De Michelis (2005, 249).

[40] Schnäbele (2010).

Europe could be introduced to yoga.[41] One needs to maintain one's own physical health in order to be able to meet the demands of work and one's private life. This is part of the neoliberal appeal to the subjects' relationship with themselves: Help yourself to maintain your own health. Personal responsibility for one's own health is mandatory, health being defined traditionally as nonexistence of disease, but increasingly being defined as a state of physical and mental wellbeing. The demands of aesthetic self-presentation have increased in recent decades in an highly visual service economy with the result that the appearance of health and fitness might even be more important than health itself. Professional success in many ways depends on the employees' successful presentation to the outside world. This trend towards successful self-presentation is based on the increase of affective work in the service sector, which requires direct customer contact, where a certain physical appearance and certain behaviors, such as a "natural smile" are expected. The majority of employees in the affective work sector are women. Considering this, it comes as no surprise that the majority of people practicing yoga—70–85 %—are women.[42] Yoga practice perfectly blends into the lives of many practitioners, yet this is also ambivalent as I shall show.

The Constitution of a Useful Body

Contemporary yoga is valued for being both a physical exercise for perfecting the body and as a mental training of the mind. Singleton extensively discusses this point specifically focusing on the start of the twentieth century.[43] Alter even concludes that the foundation for the development of yoga towards a predominantly physical practice already emerged with the evolution of *haṭhayoga*.[44] In *haṭhayoga* the human body was regarded as an instrument to overcome physicality, by applying mental discipline as prescribed in classical scriptures. Alter suggests that the basis of the fitness aspect of the practice was already laid. True or not, the ambivalence of the body is an important aspect of today's practice, as it has been for a couple of centuries.[45] Yet there is another aspect which exerts a lot of influence on the experience of one's body in contemporary yoga practice: Following socio-critical positions, the body can be conceptualized as a place of consumption.[46] The consuming body is defined through its visibility within consumer society. It consumes food, fashion, attitudes, and bodily techniques. It consumes and at the same time it represents the marketability of the subject. The body as an advertising

[41] Strauss (2005, 13 and 31).
[42] Fuchs (1990), Schnäbele (2010).
[43] Singleton (2010).
[44] Alter (2004, 21).
[45] Singleton (2010).
[46] Featherstone (1982).

and projection space is used strategically in order to achieve clever social positioning within the work sector and in one's personal life. Still, it is a relatively passive body which forms in the development of service- and consumer societies: In the twentieth century the amount of physical work decreased gradually due to the growth of the service sector and decline of basic production in post-industrial societies. Hence Barbalet's and Lyon's claim: "With the domination of mental over manual labor the phenomenal experience of the body and its ideological and common-sense representation is consumerist."[47] In this sense, the body becomes a place of consumption whose task it is to accept requests for consumption and, in exchange, work in paid employment. Such daily use of the body stands in sharp contrast with the conscious, aware posture practice of a yoga class, as will be discussed further down.

During yoga classes, physical experiences are created, lived through, discussed, and afterwards integrated into one's vast amount of socio-cultural knowledge. These experiences are specific for contemporary society, for they are embedded in the social setting of the yoga group class and, furthermore, they are embedded in the surroundings of the class: Visiting a yoga studio after a challenging day at work or after bringing the children to school, every practitioner brings their own cultural background with them into the yoga practice itself, which generally is that of consumer society. The next paragraphs give some examples of personal body experiences during yoga practice and their cultural interpretations. It gives an impression of the actual perspective on, and therefore also production of, contemporary postural yoga. However, these observations have to be seen as only one aspect of today's yoga practice, among manifold others, such as the understanding of yoga as a spiritual path or specific psychological reactions which are embedded in contemporary practice. This paper focuses singularly on the construct of the physical body and on the wider social implications of bodily experiences.

In the following I shall demonstrate how contemporary postural yoga "works on the body" and give some examples of typical bodily experiences and their ex-post discursive evaluation. The interview quotes and observations in the next paragraphs are drawn from the previously mentioned empirical research by Schnäbele, published in 2010. For this qualitative, explorative study, in 2006 and 2007 multiple, single, and group interviews with 34 yoga practitioners, male and mostly female, were analyzed to produce an overview of the discursive field of contemporary yoga practice. The sample was drawn from the population of an urban area, namely the city of Hamburg, Germany. How exactly and in what ways is the awareness of the body shaped in and by yoga practice? The perception and discursive construction of the human body in contemporary yoga practice are generally structured by two patterns: Firstly, they are moderated through the experience of limits, for example by testing the limits of personal strength and flexibility; secondly, an inside versus outside perspective of the body is created.

[47] Barbalet and Lyon (1994, 52).

Limits

The issue of limits is part of the standard conversation of yoga practitioners in the aforesaid study. It is, for example, expressed in the headstand (*śīrṣāsana*) being the favorite exercise. "I have always thought that the headstand is great," is not an isolated statement but a standard phrase. The headstand is an *āsana* which is often associated with the fear of falling over and getting hurt. In addition, the headstand requires some strength and a strong sense of balance. The exercise is therefore considered to be challenging and difficult, mentally as well as physically. Nevertheless, it is claimed to be one favorite exercise by the great majority of yoga practitioners. There is a direct connection here to testing one's own limits and the headstand challenge does just that. Physical and mental development go hand in hand. New realms of action are created on both levels. Accordingly, advanced yoga practitioners regard difficult positions such as arm balances, e.g. scorpion pose (*vṛś cikāsana*) or forearm stand (*piñcamayurāsana*), or variations of any reverse postures as their favorite exercises.

The conception of crossing limits fulfills a very important role in practitioners' lives.[48] Limits are used to "map the body" which practicioners often experienced as a one-dimensional place before beginning a regular yoga practice. The mere fact that humans are physical beings does not necessarily imply that they have elaborate body awareness. Yoga practitioners communicate quite the opposite, namely that the demands of consumer society to use one's body as a means of consumption make the body more often than not a passive "foreign territory." It is typically regarded as a consuming entity that is meant to function well and look attractive.[49] This perception gradually changes in the course of regular yoga practice. "You feel your own limits, you can somehow locate your own body," is but one remark. The experience of limits allows practitioners to differentiate between their bodies' visible ("outside") appearance within society and their personal experience of a sentient body ("inside"). The more the body is "explored" and thereby mapped, the more detailed the inner body awareness becomes. This gradual process is described as something positive in any case: "Well, you always feel really good afterwards and it's nice to actually reach your limits, it's also some kind of challenge."

In light of this, limits are constantly pushed further in yoga practice. Every new *āsana* is a challenge that sometimes has to be practiced intensively until you finally master it: "And it's really nice when you have practiced for months and months and all of a sudden, you can do something that you weren't able to do before, yeah. Nice." This process is described as a development process which requires both social space and time. The body is not "discovered" at one particular moment, but is gradually experienced through the yoga practice by continuously setting new limits: "And it's really exciting . . . to go to your own limits. For me, it was some sort of . . . development process, also that I noticed where my limits are." This process

[48] See also chapter 4 by Hauser, Chapter "Touching the limits, Assessing Pain: On Language Performativity, Health, and Well-Being in Yoga Classes".

[49] Barbalet and Lyon (1994).

produces success stories: "You think that [a certain *āsana*] is impossible or you can't do it any longer and then you see, somehow it does work and some postures you really can go into finally after a certain amount of time."

Yoga practitioners find that it is an essential aspect of yoga practice to successively explore their own limits, to "touch your limits" again and again. On the one hand, limits are realized and accepted as a given, on the other hand, they are produced in the moment of the experience, both on a physical level and, in the same instant, also on a mental level. Hence limits are (re-)created in the process of yoga practice, for example when testing your own abilities with regards to the headstand. The limit is drawn on the basis of yoga practice, i.e. in respect to the attempts to master certain practices, and it is moved in the course of further practice towards greater competences. Insofar as the body is mapped by drawing limits, this process allows the body to consciously dissolve limitations. When there was no limit because there was no awareness of the limit, it could not be dissolved either. Creating awareness of limits enables overcoming them.

Inside/Outside

One effect of body experiences in posture-based yoga class is the awareness of limits as described above, and subsequently the heightened awareness of the "inner" functionality of the body. Such an internal "functional" awareness of the body stands in contrast to the external "visual" demands of consumer society. The following extract from an interview with a yoga practitioner is a good example to illustrate this:

> I still remember that I was very, very focused on the outside in terms of my body feeling. So, well, I looked in the mirror and thought O.K., I like that, I don't like that, but I didn't really have a feeling of "I feel good" or "something hurts" or "I'd like to be more flexible," or something like that, but it was all focused on the outside a lot, very much like, to what extent am I what I would like to be on the outside and not, how am I feeling at the moment [translation V.S.].[50]

The above quote illustrates a very important structure in consumer society: The hegemonic expectation to present an aesthetic body is typically met as much as possible. The body is perceived in a one-dimensional manner, as a projection screen for beauty ideals and socially accepted behaviors. Creating a socially acceptable body thus typically defines the relationship with one's body.

The quote above at the same time illustrates how in the course of appropriating one's "own" body during yoga practice, the body is given a very different position. Adapting to social norms of beauty recedes to the background gradually while the communicative exchange between consciousness and body is experienced as being more important. This establishes an opposition to discourses of aesthetics.

[50] All interviews have been published in Schnäbele (2010).

The inner feeling and functionality of the body encourages producing a counter-discourse. The body becomes multidimensional. It is increasingly defined through its "inner" functionality and its wellbeing and less through its "outside" appearance. Discursively created norms of visual beauty are avoided when defining beauty from the inside. "That's what body awareness is. . . . Even from the inside, I also feel . . . this beauty, simply a—a body." Another statement expresses an appreciative relationship with one's physicality:

> No matter what the body is like, simply when you feel it, how great it is and, yeah, this somehow, this beauty, but from the inside, not what it looks like or something like that, like, I simply feel: Great [translation V.S.].

This inner perspective contrasts with hegemonic discourses of objectivation and outer evaluation of one's own body. This becomes especially clear in the following extract from an interview:

> I had an aggressive attitude towards my body. Well, I looked at the body as a sort of object. You have to be like that, you have to be able to run for half an hour; you have to be able to do this and that. You are not allowed to be hungry at a particular time. . . . Yeah, you are my object, you belong to me; I am in the position to form you in any way I wish. And accordingly, well, I had a really really negative feeling towards my body; well, I didn't consciously sense my body by itself. I rather felt like I was at war with it [translation V.S.].

The above passage continues with the statement that she was not happy with her outer appearance, followed by an elaboration of the ways in which her body image changed in the course of yoga practice, thus establishing the communicative relationship with her sentient body, similar to what has been outlined above and which is typical of yoga practice. She notes that she "must treat the body with respect . . . that you get back much more, then; that it would cope with much more as well." A relationship of exchange is established between body and consciousness: The body can cope with more intense challenges when it is treated "respectfully." This requires that the body is given agency. Insofar as the Cartesian dichotomy of mind versus body, as well as the objectivation of the physical, are gradually transformed, the body itself becomes a subject. The body becomes a sanctuary and a place of resistance against pervasive demands of consumer society.

The Subjectivity of the Body: The Useful Body

The contemporary practice of Hatha Yoga converges with the renewed emphasis on physical culture in the twentieth century: The body is given much more attention. Both its appearance and fitness become meaningful topics. Besides, in sociology theorizing the body and its agentive dimension is a rather new concept. To some extent it levels the Cartesian concept of superiority of mind over matter. The superiority of the mind for centuries implied the inferiority of the human body. However, as an effect of yoga practice the dominance of the mind is actively and, most important, practically questioned. The popular rationalization of Hatha Yoga

legitimizes this experience while it stands in contrast to the Cartesian dichotomy. Apart from various nuances, it basically postulates the unity of all mental, rational-mental, and emotional processes with physical existence and only separates the human soul which exists beyond the process of thinking, from human material existence.[51]

Movements during yoga practice convey a heightened somatic experience, or, rather, an identification with the physical body. One does not have a body, one is the body. Hence I follow Carolyn Thomas who in respect to sports claims: "Rather than treating the body as an object, or as an 'it,' ... the athlete becomes one with the body. In the phenomenological sense, the athlete not only has a body but is her or his body."[52] In my view this equally applies to a yoga practitioner. The focus on challenging physical exercises is the same in both cases. To experience subjectivity, the process of conscious thinking is secondary. The movement itself in the present experience is a form of subjectivation. In Thomas' words: "Before anyone tells you or before you think about it, you, as your body, experience yourself as a moving being and as all the physical components that comprise movement."[53] The separation of body and mind is subsequently established, insofar as it is subordinate to the experience of the moment. Indeed the experience of movement precedes the discursive (which does not make it prediscursive, but exceeds discursiveness), although it takes place in a discursively configured space and even though procedural subjectivation of body and mind is always transmitted socially.[54] Ongoing experience can step out of the discursive into a non-discursive moment of "flow."[55] An opening for transformation is created in such moments of flow which not only yoga practitioners describe as being special: "Such moments reflect a sense of completeness, harmony, achievement, sensuousness, personal insight, or spiritual joy."[56] In these moments, thinking itself can be experienced as contingent, which implies that social discourses, e.g. consumerist discourses, can be experienced as contingent and can thereby be challenged.

These processes of transformation of body and, at the same time consciousness, not only affect yoga practice, but everyday life as well. They become especially relevant where constant appearance management is expected of subjects, such as in the knowledge work sector of the service industry. Especially in case of employment in the service sector, customer contact requires constant friendliness, an open attitude, and a constant smile. One's own external presentation thus dominates the relationship to the body in the context of gainful employment. The body is "managed" accordingly—you take care of its appearance, it is kept healthy and it is

[51] Eliade (2009) and Feuerstein (2001).

[52] Thomas (1996, 510).

[53] Ibid., 511.

[54] Papadopoulos and Stephenson (2006, 23) and Schnäbele (2010).

[55] Csikszentmihalyi (2008).

[56] Thomas (1996, 511).

trained.[57] Attention on physicality implies that the body is seen as a personal resource and as a social symbol. This especially applies to its visibility and thus its external appearance. The objectified physicality is questioned by yoga practice through the processes of defining and overcoming the body's limits and thereby creating a personal inside-versus-outside perspective of one's own body. Moreover, moments of flow challenge the outside perspective of the aesthetic body, because they offer an alternative, inner physical awareness. The body is successively given a subjective position, namely that of a part of the "unity" of consciousness and physical presence. This specific yogic body is termed here the "useful body," i.e. a body which is still viewed as an objective resource and a visual representation of the subject, but considerably less so. Rather, the useful body is perceived as a sentient body and functional agent in everyday actions.

A more refined perception of the body and its increased strength and flexibility make it even more useful to yoga practitioners who, for example, claim that "I sense the body and I also have the feeling that I can do something with it, [while] before [practicing yoga] I felt like it would interfere with my plans." The body is described as a reliable partner, for example when having to carry heavy loads:

> You get stronger and, no matter what you are facing, you are somehow ready for it, even if it's only on a physical level to start with, for instance, being able to carry certain things without being scared of getting hurt. I still work as a waitress and so on, [now] I somehow have a better feeling to do so [translation V.S.].

The new experience of the body as gained by yoga practice spills over to the employment world of the waitress. The body is used differently than before, the fear of getting hurt by carrying too heavy loads is maybe not completely gone, but significantly reduced. In many different work and everyday life contexts, the strength of the body is emphasized: "That someone could move like that . . ., that [I have] such power . . ., this was so enchanting somehow." From the internal perspective, a strong body becomes more important than its aesthetic, outside appearance. This fact is emphasized by the shift from the "external" (appearance, beauty, visibility) to the "inside" perspective (functionality, awareness).

However, it cannot be denied in this context that the body is also experienced as being aesthetic. Yoga is "not only gymnastics . . . where your legs become much more toned, much slimmer or something like that," these are only "side effects." Effects such as a better performance, beauty, or fitness of the body are well noted. Speaking of "side effects" suggests that they are minor while truly they are immensely important when it comes to fulfilling demands of post-Fordist society to promote oneself. At any rate, the importance of appearance and performance is put into perspective by the growing awareness of an "inside." The useful body is considered beautiful; at the same time it is perceived as an agent of its own. And thus its "inner" beauty shall be displayed to the outside. This ambivalence is not dissolved anywhere, but is, if at all, taken with a pinch of salt, as in the example above, where the interviewee talks about "side effects," but laughs at the

[57] Shilling (1993, 5).

same time: "You cannot escape social requirements and expectations." Considering that this comment is being delivered with a laugh, the side effects have to be more important than the words themselves suggest. Taking social requirements of aesthetic appearance management and self-marketing into account this is hardly surprising. Other side effects of posture-based yoga include physical capacity, patience, and flexibility.

Conclusion

Contemporary yoga practice in Germany (and possibly elsewhere) modifies the relationship of body and consciousness in a way which creates the reflexivity, strength, and flexibility required under post-Fordist work conditions and, at the same time, shapes the outside appearance according to the hegemonic discourses on beauty and efficient, socially accepted behavior in work environments. The body gradually becomes stronger, a more effective tool. Yoga practice integrates into everyday life as it helps to cope with pressure of the work environment, and helps to build up resilience, flexibility, and the strength to face the demands of modern work life. What is more, another systematic effect of regular yoga practice is the development of more refined body awareness. The body gradually becomes an agent of its own: "The useful body."

Over the course of such a gradual change, divergences are noted by the yoga practitioner between the altered self-perception and his or her persisting working conditions. The body awareness changes, becomes more complex, but the demands of social and work life remain. Thus, one central aspect that becomes clear to most yoga practitioners is the contrast between the transforming experiences in yoga practice and the constant demands of the work environment. For example, the need for regeneration is "heard" from "inside" by listening to the signals of the body, such as exhaustion, headaches, or simply feeling unwell. Gradually, the individual pays more attention to the needs of the body (and consequently the mind as well) at his or her workplace. This results in subversive actions such as establishing small breaks on the job for one's own regeneration, mostly without making it a "political topic." The obligation to always be available is thereby avoided. Another strategy is to favor part-time instead of full-time work.

Resistance against behavioral demands in work is not politically motivated, but is an expression of the gradual rejection of the monopolization of the body by societies' demands. Accessing the "entire person" is met with resistance, which takes the form of claiming control over one's own life and time and defending the regeneration both body and mind need. No political background is expressed. Subversive practices develop exclusively from the need to maintain one's own embodied existence which, in yoga practice, is experienced as something immensely positive and alive. It is often stated that the "perfect yogic life" cannot be realized within a capitalistic society, beginning with the mere fact that everyday work life does not allow enough time for an extensive yoga practice. Many yoga practitioners simply try to achieve a place of happy "centered" subjectivity under

diverting, distressing work, and life conditions that are determined by others. Micro-political subversive strategies as described in the above paragraph often are enough to defend one's health effectively.

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The Introduction of Yoga in German Schools: A Case Study

Suzanne Augenstein

Abstract Yoga styles develop according to the target group, goals, and underlying social conditions. This process can be clearly observed in the way that yoga training for children has been implemented in some schools in Germany. In 1999 this training was developed and named *Körperorientiertes Programm* (body-focused program). Initially it aimed to help children of kindergarten and elementary school age, successively integrating a number of objectives. Its original goal was to offset deficits in motor skills, concentration, and social behavior through a specifically adapted form of yoga training. It will be shown that initially yoga was not yet generally accepted by German society. Only when yoga was classified as a technique for improving health did it become viewed more positively, and funding was then allocated for conducting projects in schools. The objectives were expanded at the same time. Over the course of 10 years, by integrating accompanying measures it was possible to refine the original program into a method compatible with the emerging trend towards "healthy schools." The chapter concludes that yoga in German schools has evolved from an exotic fringe discipline into one where there are high hopes of its capacity to solve complex problems, indeed it is currently subject to excessive expectations.

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Introduction

An investigation of the spread of yoga in German schools shortly before the millennium demonstrated that yoga training could be found in all types of school.[1] At that time yoga was offered in schools by committed individuals who knew very little about the situation elsewhere. In 1999 working groups were formed at a national level that led to an exchange of information about children's yoga.[2] The term *Kinderyoga* (children's yoga) was introduced and gradually accepted for practicing yoga with children. Still, the prevailing attitude at the time suggested that yoga was more tacitly tolerated than officially recognized. I received an email from a teacher on 19 March 2000 that was typical in this respect:

> I tell the school authorities and the parents that my yoga exercises are concentration exercises, just like any other exercises... I would be worried about causing resistance with the term yoga because it is often associated with a complete ideology. Why should I provoke unnecessary conflict when it can be so easily avoided?[3]

Two years later there were still reports of difficulties in accepting yoga:

> There can be serious reservations against yoga in schools. One mother was alarmed . . . by a leaflet produced for parents, for example. As a member of a fundamentalist Christian group she feared that her child would be in great danger of being possessed by the devil during the silent periods.[4]

In connection with my doctoral thesis on the spread of yoga in German schools two conferences were organized at the University of Essen in 1999 and 2000 with the aim of revealing more about the current state of development of children's yoga. There was no difficulty getting teachers of yoga for children to confirm their attendance, as it was their first opportunity to meet fellow professionals in a field that still operated in virtual isolation. However, it proved extremely problematic to find well-known speakers with academic backgrounds who were prepared to publicly acknowledge that they practiced yoga and were thus "devotees" of the art. They feared that it would impede their academic careers in the future. These fears were not entirely without justification; yoga practitioners in Germany at the end of the twentieth century were easily suspected to be a "member of a cult." The assumption that "psychotechniques" could be harmful to the general population even led to a committee on "alleged cults and psychogroups" being formed by the German government to investigate the potential danger for German people, and which might have necessitated political intervention. However, the committee was

[1] This investigation was part of Augenstein's (2003a) doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, the spread of yoga in German schools has been documented in several final theses at diploma, masters, and teaching qualification level.

[2] There were similar networks on an international level organized by REY (Research on Yoga in Education) and the Brahma Kumaris.

[3] Quoted in Augenstein (2003b, 42).

[4] A second teacher, quoted in Augenstein (2002, 22).

not able to determine any possible danger from groups (and new religious movements) offering yoga. Against all expectations, far from being rejected, the psychotechniques under investigation were accepted and received positively by the German public. As a consequence, in its concluding report in 1998 the committee recommended that the German government should no longer obstruct this "area of the health sector," either through prejudice, or through professional or personal interests.[5] It also advised that as the field was obviously extremely significant it should be given more attention, and proposed that more information be gathered by conducting further research.[6] The conditions were thus ripe for yoga to undergo a gradual transformation in legal terms from a "psychotechnique" to a "technique for improving health."

Development and Evaluation of the Körperorientiertes Programm (KOP)

At the first conference on children's yoga at the University of Essen an initiative to enhance quality control was formed, concluding that "data and facts" were prerequisites for assisting yoga on the path to social recognition.[7] It was acknowledged that parents, school authorities, and teachers were justified in seeking transparency concerning the contents of courses. Therefore providers of yoga training programs had to be requested to explain their choice of method and approach. Moreover, when dealing with authorities it would be sensible to adopt terminology familiar to them in order to break down practical and language barriers.[8] As part of the general aim towards establishing a scholarly basis for yoga, from 1999 to 2001 I developed and evaluated a yoga-based training program for children within the framework of my doctoral thesis.[9] This program later became a central element of the projects implemented and carried out in schools. Acknowledging that yoga in schools needs to be communicated in an appropriate way, the language used was adapted to avoid difficulties in being accepted. Thus the training program was called *Körperorientiertes Programm* (KOP, literally: body-focused program) rather than yoga training. Not only did this strategy increase the acceptance of the program, but it identified KOP as a specific training program

[5] See Deutscher Bundestag 1998. *Endbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen."* Printed matter 13/10950. An expert on cults from the Catholic Church also attended the conference in Essen, seeking a substantiated approach to yoga.

[6] Ibid., 55.

[7] The first meeting took place in Ratingen on 5 December 1999. Among the participants were the author and Klaus Engel (1999), who later founded the Society for Meditation and Meditation Research and the *Journal of Meditation and Meditation Research*.

[8] See also Augenstein (2002, 24).

[9] Augenstein (2003a).

within the wider context of children's yoga. The latter phrase only very generally refers to practicing yoga with children and represents a diverse range of directions and techniques. The term KOP, by contrast, stands for a special, very precisely defined form of training.

Trials were conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of KOP using test and control groups from parallel school classes, which were assessed on several occasions by standardized research methods. The test group received 10 weekly yoga training sessions, each lasting 45 min. The control group was given the same amount of common psychomotor training. Standardized test procedures were applied to ascertain the effect the training had on body posture in general, on concentration, and on social behavior. It was hence proven that children who participated in the KOP had significantly improved their motor skills. Improvements in concentration and social behavior were also observed but could not be ascribed solely to the training program.[10]

Selection of the Target Group

KOP is aimed at children in kindergarten and elementary school, and its goals are to improve posture, concentration, and social behavior. The target group and goals were selected according to structural conditions and the special needs of children in Germany. My research on the distribution of yoga in German schools had shown that yoga was mainly adopted with great success in institutions that offer a high degree of freedom in their teaching methods: in preschools, kindergartens, elementary schools, and special schools.[11] By contrast, it is more difficult to integrate yoga into the secondary education level as these schools have tight schedules and highly specialized classes.[12] Given the favorable initial conditions in elementary schools and kindergartens, the training program was developed for a target group of 5–10-year-old children. Several other arguments supported the choice of this target group. First of all, elementary school training in Germany generally finishes at noon. Hence in the afternoon school facilities are open to be used when needed;

[10] Augenstein (2004b).

[11] Augenstein (2003b, 37). In Germany children at the age of 3 years can attend a *Kindergarten* (preschool, nursery), generally run by private organizations that receive state subsidies for their work. *Vorschulen* (English: kindergarten) are institutions that directly precede elementary schools with the specific task of preparing children for school. Compulsory schooling begins in Germany between the ages of five and seven. Children spend either 4 or 6 years at a *Grundschule* (elementary school), depending on the federal state they live in. Children with special educational needs—since they may be mentally handicapped, speech impaired, or behaviorally challenged—attend a *Sonderschule* (special school), taught by specially trained teachers.

[12] After elementary school, children are distributed according to their cognitive ability to the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule*, or the most academically challenging *Gymnasium*. In several federal states there are also a number of non-selective comprehensive schools, called *Gesamtschule*, which run parallel to these three selective school forms.

staff and respective financial resources can be made available. Therefore every child in this target group could potentially get the chance to participate in the program, and thus a large number of children would profit from it. In addition, from a pedagogic standpoint it is preferable to begin development programs for children as early as possible, thereby enabling neural pathways to be forged in the brain that will facilitate the later acquisition of knowledge.[13] Learning programs in early years can also help prevent developmental problems becoming engrained that would be extremely difficult or even impossible to resolve at a later date. This concerns the development of motor skills as well as attitudes.[14]

Motor Function as a Development Goal

Findings on motor function development in children present an inconsistent picture of the current situation.[15] Even if existing studies do not allow us to draw clear-cut conclusions, it is generally acknowledged that children in Germany do exhibit problems with their motor skills and that these difficulties need to be addressed with appropriate measures.[16] Locating the source of the problem has proved difficult. Families with only one child, single parent families, working mothers, differing styles of parenting, changes in spatial experience among children, too little movement, and diseases of civilization have all been investigated and excluded as single, ultimate reasons, as Gaschler has shown, warning of a "simplification of the facts and a preference for 'what if' scenarios."[17] Several observations of children made during their participation in the KOP confirm the necessity of developing motor skills such as strength, suppleness, coordination, stamina, and speed. The issue with motor skills becomes particularly apparent with the tiger pose (a variant of *cakravākāsana*), see Fig. 1.[18] In this posture the children kneel down in order to stretch their right leg and left arm, and respectively, the left leg and the right arm.

[13] See Caspary (2006) and Spitzer (2002).

[14] Dordel and Welsch (1999) and Wahl (2004).

[15] Gaschler (2000).

[16] The Ministry of Education in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg acknowledged the importance of scheduling daily exercise as part of the curricula it introduced in the academic year 1994/95. Teachers in all school types and of all age groups were explicitly asked to rotate activities and learning methods, and thus to balance concentration and relaxation periods. Similar programs were set up by the Ministry of Education in Bremen and in 1998 by the Ministry of Education in Lower Saxony (called *Niedersachsen macht Schule durch Bewegte Schule*) in which over 1,000 schools participated. Other federal states followed with their own initiatives.

[17] Gaschler (1999, 14), see also ibid., 8–13.

[18] The diagnostic potential of posture in connection with KOP was investigated in a diploma thesis by Braun (2007).

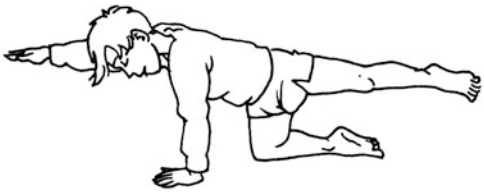

Fig. 1 The tiger pose (Photo: Proßowsky 1999, courtesy: Kamphausen)

Fig. 2 Girl trying to perform the tiger pose (Photo: Augenstein)

Figure 2 shows how the exercise is in fact being carried out by a school child, illustrating several characteristics frequently observed in practice that suggest impairment in all areas of motor function:

- Strength: The back muscles are not strong enough to hold the back straight. The arm and leg muscles are also insufficiently developed to hold the arm and leg outstretched.

- Suppleness: Inadequate elasticity in the leg muscles makes it difficult to stretch the leg fully, so that the leg remains bent when carrying out the posture.
- Coordination: The child cannot coordinate arm and leg movements properly. The right arm and right leg are stretched out instead of the right arm and left leg.
- Stamina: There is also a deficiency in the level of stamina when carrying out the posture. The child's open facial expression in the photo reveals that although she is making an effort, a sustained performance—in this case meaning a frequent repetition of the posture —is rendered impossible due to her lack of strength.
- Speed: Practicing postures quickly is not one of the goals of yoga. Nevertheless, the capacity for speed can be deduced from exercises such as this one by observing the ability to change posture quickly. Speed would not be possible for this child as she lacks strength and coordination.

Meanwhile artificial aids are used in KOP to make it easier for participants to coordinate their movement. For example, a striped sock called "tiger sock" is placed over both one hand and one foot of the practicing child, and the group is instructed to stretch "once with [hands and feet covered by socks], once without."

Social Behavior as a Development Goal

Criteria for judging good or bad social behavior can differ greatly between societies and are also subject to change within one and the same society over time.[19] Generally speaking, "good behavior" stands for behavior that corresponds to the norms within a society or social group—in other words, it is regarded as normal. By contrast, "bad behavior" represents social behavior that deviates from the norms and is seen as abnormal. To put it simply, "good behavior" by children in a school setting means that children are able and willing to follow the lesson, allowing the teacher to teach in an atmosphere that is as free from disruption as possible. This is because the primary function of school is to make the children learn.

Recent research and a number of observations made by myself point to the immense difficulties in schools caused by disruptive behavior among pupils.[20] Disruptions to lessons can become so severe that learning is rendered impossible. In several cases, the school board members themselves complained about this situation in public. Disruptive behavior can present itself in many forms. At the University at Bamberg scholars developed a list of "disruptive behaviors" (*Verhaltensauffälligkeiten*) identified among children. This list is given to elementary school teachers as an up-to-date and simple tool for assessing disruptive behavior. This list mentions problems such as lack of concentration, fidgeting, lack of precision, impaired performance, low motivation to do well, low

[19] Elias (1976).

[20] Augenstein (2004a) and Holtappels et al. (1997).

self-confidence, depression, angry outbursts, anxiety, mood swings, oversensitivity, deceitfulness, disobedience, difficulties making contact, damaging one's own property and that of others, attention-seeking, overly conforming, aggressive behavior towards other pupils, being bullied by other pupils, psychosomatic disorders, and speech or language impairment.[21] The causes for disruptive behavior are complex and cannot be reduced to simple and ultimate factors, just as in the case of deficiencies in motor function. However, in this context it is sufficient to point out that the problem exists and solutions need to be found. Given this background situation, the issue of concentration is given particular significance as a development goal.

Concentration as a Development Goal

Concentration is a basic prerequisite for learning at school. Maria Montessori (1870–1952) in her educational theory also discussed the systematic development of concentration and highlighted an interesting phenomenon.[22] She observed something that had previously been ignored by educationalists, namely the capacity of children to concentrate totally on a task and become fully absorbed by it. She called this process "polarization of attention." After children resurfaced from their deep concentration Montessori noticed a change of behavior that she labeled "normalization." Before the polarization of attention, antisocial characteristics such as "caprice," "disorder," "timidity," and "sloth" are apparent. After the attention is polarized, positive qualities such as "concentration," "work," "discipline," and "sociability" are exhibited.[23] Montessori argued that the polarization of attention is raised in connection with an external object that the child finds extremely attractive. Looking for methods of generating this polarization of attention subsequently became one of the central concerns of Montessori pedagogy.

It is hardly known whether Montessori in the development of her theory was inspired by observations in India. It is, however, certain that she wrote her main work during her stay in India 1939–1946.[24] There are some interesting parallels between her interpretations and, conversely, core concepts of yoga philosophy. The latter includes virtually identical stages of development compared with Montessori's steps towards the polarization of attention (and normalization), although the terms differ. An equivalent to the polarization of attention is described

[21] This list is known as the *Bamberger Liste von Verhaltensauffälligkeiten für Lehrerinnen und Lehrer* (BLVL), see Augenstein (2003b, 275–277).

[22] Montessori (1973).

[23] The aspects of social behavior listed by Montessori (1973, 182) would be termed differently today. The transformation from antisocial to social behavior is nevertheless clear.

[24] Possibly Montessori self-avoided any explicit reference to other cultures in order to prevent her work being rejected in the West.

in the ancient *Yogasūtra* as *saṃyama*, a phenomenon of perception that can be summed up as "immersion."[25] Immersion is completed in a multistage process that begins with concentration (*dhāraṇā*), giving way to absorption (*dhyāna*), before finally merging with the object of perception (*samādhi*). *Saṃyama* leads to a gradually increasing bond with the object of perception that culminates in the disappearance of self-awareness and acquired categories of perception. A space is created that is free of thought, characterized by immediate presence and pure perception, in which the real goal of yoga can be realized—a direct view of reality. The *Yogasūtra* was assembled about 2,000 years ago and is ascribed to Patañjali. He came to the fundamental conclusion that every thought process leaves behind a trace in one's consciousness called *saṃskāra*.[26] What is interesting in this connection is the exceptionally strong and changing power of immersion as described by Patañjali, which displays great similarities to Montessori's normalization. The merger (*samādhi*) between consciousness and the object of perception dissolves old impressions in the consciousness and subsequently leads to it taking a completely new direction. The mind is completely cleared through the merger and thus succeeds in attaining a state beyond consciousness.

Given that yoga techniques are specifically intended to develop concentration, it seems an obvious step to apply these techniques in the case of children, too. The quest for methods that children find attractive and that bring about a polarization of attention is by no means complete. For yoga classes with children, techniques need to be developed that focus not only on external objects (like the "tiger socks") but also on internal processes. These include techniques for raising sensory perception, for instance, massages that stimulate tactile awareness, or singing to increase the auditory sense and thus improve children's concentration on certain melodies.

The KOP Exercises

The primary aim for developing KOP was to identify yoga exercises that were suitable for implementing the development goals of good posture, concentration, and social behavior. The exercises should be simple but effective. They should be suitable for children of kindergarten and elementary school age, as well as for children with special requirements (particularly in the case of obesity). These exercises were selected from those yoga postures that were already documented in reference works on Hatha Yoga. In case existing postures were not considered

[25] The *Yogasūtra* is ascribed to Patañjali, one of the most important Sanskrit sources on yoga, see Bäumer (1985).

[26] This observation has also formed one of the basic assumptions in research on the brain for the last few decades in the West, leading to a paradigm shift whereby mental and physical processes are now regarded as a single unit.

Fig. 3 Children enjoying the swing dance (Photo: Proßowsky, source: Augenstein 2003a, b)

suitable to achieve the development goals, specific exercises (or versions of a pose) were created.

As the polarization of attention is largely dependent on the interest shown in the object, the degree to which children find the exercise attractive was an important criterion for selection. Petra Proßowsky was closely involved in trying out various exercises during a pretest phase in order to identify techniques that make the posture (*āsana*) accessible for children. As one of the pioneers of children's yoga in Germany, Proßowsky had developed many yoga techniques specifically suitable for the needs and abilities of children. Some of her suggestions initially seemed unusual, but they were so well received by the children in practice that they subsequently became an essential part of KOP. One example is the "dog obedience school" (*Hundeschule*), which accompanies the introduction of the dog pose (*adhomukhaśvānāsana*) in the second KOP session. In this dog obedience school the children are ordered to "sit!" and "beg," which encourages a playful attitude to the dog pose. In another KOP session the tiger's "birthday" is celebrated, combining the tiger pose (*cakravākāsana*) with a "swing dance" (see Fig. 3). When selecting meditation exercises, well documented techniques were preferred in the name of transparency.[27]

Based on these criteria, a total of 32 exercises were chosen for KOP, supplemented by group exercises in a circle, massages, pair work, meditation, and games. The session begins, in analogy to the sun salutation, with a greeting to the world (*Gruß an die Welt*) as invented by Proßowsky.[28] The greeting to the world is a dynamic series of movements particularly suitable for children. The 11 exercises stretch the spine in all directions and increase physical flexibility.

[27] These exercises are described in *Traumgeschichten* (Dream Stories) by Proßowsky (2003, 2005), c.f. Proßowsky (2007, 2008).

[28] Proßowsky (2005, 10). The greeting to the world consists of the following exercises: Mountain pose (*tāḍāsana*), raised hand pose (*hastauttānāsana*), standing forward bend (*uttānāsana*), half moon pose (*ardhacandrāsana*), tree pose (*vṛkṣāsana*), lotus mudra, and as new developments: Sun, moon, stars, greeting, circling arm.

Within the context of KOP, the greeting to the world serves both as a ritual for starting off the exercise session and as a warm-up exercise in preparation for the postures still to come. Integrating two forward bends from a standing position also improves pelvic mobility, which is an important prerequisite for achieving the postures. The greeting to the world is followed by 13 basic exercises which are integrated in a playful manner.[29] As with the greeting to the world, these exercises are repeated in each session. Eight supplementary exercises of increasing difficulty are then successively introduced.[30] Most KOP exercises are performed dynamically as this best fulfills the children's need to move about. Reciting the accompanying verses focuses the children's attention and generates a feeling of belonging. Here too, Proßowsky's techniques proved highly attractive for children. The dynamic tiger pose, for example, is accompanied by spoken rhymes: "The tiger stretches and makes himself round, he is getting his back healthy and sound!" Adapting static exercises by combining them with incentives motivates the children to maintain their postures. Children can be motivated to maintain a posture in a simple way by integrating sound into the process of practicing an *āsana*. A posture is maintained until a signal is given to stop with a singing bowl.

The interaction between the participants in the course of KOP generates a social situation that allows addressing issues of behavior. Behavioral training is thus an integral component and also constitutes the basis of all the selected exercises. The children learn in a structured manner and also by means of the structure itself. Care is taken that the children enter and leave the room in an orderly manner. They are reminded to stay on their mats during the session, and not to disturb other children while they are exercising.

Yoga Projects in Schools: Against Violence and Racism

Before new ideas get implemented in the German education system, they generally have to undergo a trial period in the form of short-term projects that are carried out when sufficient funding is available. Similarly, after the development and evaluation of KOP a number of projects could be realized in schools from 2001 onwards. The first opportunity to apply KOP on a larger scale was provided by the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia with the campaign "Municipalities against the Far Right" (*Kommunen gegen Rechtsextremismus*). The state granted the municipalities one Deutsche Mark per citizen to support initiatives against right-wing extremism. In 2001 the small town Ratingen received 90,000 Deutsche Mark. Equipped with a budget of 3,000 Deutsche Mark KOP was implemented in three elementary schools and two kindergarten facilities, teaching a total of 95 children for 4 months. This provided the first opportunity to train school teachers in KOP techniques.

[29] Basic Hatha Yoga postures and, as a new development, the butterfly pose.

[30] Including a new development: The starflower pose.

The KOP was implemented in school through a local initiative against violence and racism (*Ratinger Initiative gegen Gewalt und Fremdenfeindlichkeit*).[31] The first aim in their application was to establish a plausible link between practicing yoga and preventing right-wing extremism. In order to avoid difficulties in being accepted, the term "yoga" was explicitly mentioned only once in the application:

> The [KOP] training program is characterized by a highly interdisciplinary and intercultural approach. The physical exercises have been derived from Hatha Yoga, a discipline that originates in India and that has received a great deal of research since the 1920s. The didactic implementation of these exercises is based in particular on Montessori pedagogical theories.[32]

The project was advertised with the help of the local adult education center. Every school and kindergarten in Ratingen was offered the implementation of KOP for free. School teachers were asked to join a yoga course at the adult education center, and after participating in further teacher training qualified as KOP instructors. In order to underline the legitimate nature of the project, a leaflet described KOP as a "scientifically proven" training program. Several examples were given as to how the yoga-inspired exercises would achieve the goals of the initiative against violence and racism:

> Transforming aggression into strength: The example of the lion. The children are first asked which characteristics a lion has. Depending on the children's previous experience the lion might take on a terrifying appearance. Then the children are presented with a lion which has a very different nature: the exceptionally strong and noble king of the beasts. He would never attack another animal without reason. He needs only to roar to send his enemies fleeing. After the explanation the children adopt the posture and roar like lions, thus discovering a new posture in a playful manner.[33]

Although the information for schools was delivered at very short notice, there was nearly three times as much demand for KOP as there was capacity. With only a few exceptions, all the elementary schools and kindergartens that had been contacted were interested in participating. However, due to limited funding the KOP training could be offered only at five institutions. After the completion of the training, the participating teachers assessed the KOP with the best grade, demonstrating their complete acceptance of the project. Following the project a qualification program was established to train these people to teach KOP. In the concluding report to the municipality, the term "yoga" was again mentioned only with care. Similarly the accompanying yoga course for prospective KOP-instructors was presented in very general terms as a way of gaining the necessary teaching qualifications:

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[31] This initiative was formed in 1992 as the merger of various municipal institutions and the family life centers of the local Catholic and Protestant Churches.

[32] Translated from the German application; see Suzanne Augenstein, "Antrag auf Projektförderung. Förderprogramm des Landes—Maßnahmen der Kommunen gegen Rechtsextremismus," dated 25 October 2000.

[33] This exercise was inspired by the lion pose (*siṃhāsana*).

> The teachers and educators in charge of the groups were able to learn how to carry out the program themselves by attending a course at the local adult education center, where the subject matter of the [KOP] course was addressed in detail.[34]

Improving Health Through Yoga

By 2003 the level of acceptance of yoga had changed completely, and a new source of funding provided the opportunity to continue KOP in schools. After reforms in the healthcare sector, a preventive health care system was established, promoted, and implemented by means of health insurance companies, who also offered and partially financed courses in yoga. In this manner, a subsidized market for yoga developed in accordance with supply and demand over a period of nearly 20 years.[35] For initiatives that hitherto operated at the margins of the private service sector, these newly established structures offered a good opportunity to introduce yoga, Tai Chi, or Qigong to new audiences, particularly in the preliminary phase preceding the healthcare reforms from 1989 to 1996. Since yoga was now recognized as preventive care, it became widely accepted in society, replacing its association with a cult. A reference to yoga was now no longer a hindrance when implementing subsequent KOP projects, indeed there was an explicit demand to do so.

When the Healthcare Reform Law (*Gesundheitsreformgesetz*) was passed in 1989 the German health insurance companies received a mandate for the first time to run schemes aimed at improving the health of their members, combined with the option of financing preventative healthcare measures, and it was within this context that the insurance companies first paid for yoga courses. A pragmatic approach was taken for the implementation: A method's potential for improving health was sufficient in order to grant its funding. Thus the number of subsidized yoga courses increased substantially. With reference to Germany's largest insurance company AOK (*Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse*) Deutzmann observes:

> According to figures given to me by the AOK central administration, in 1996 there were a total of 56,538 courses to improve health, booked by 756,386 participants per year. Yoga was offered in the "relaxation" category, along with autogenic training and progressive muscle relaxation (as developed by Jacobsen). In this [latter] category the AOK ran 7,110 courses per year, with 102,024 participants.[36]

[34] Translated from German, see Ratinger Initiative gegen Gewalt und Fremdenfeindlichkeit. 2002. *Dokumentation: Aktionen gegen Rechtsextremisums. Landesprogramm "Anders Miteinander. Kommunen gegen Rechtsextremismus*." Ratingen: Franz-Rath-Weiterbildungskolleg.

[35] From 1989 to 1996 and then again from 2000 to 2010. Presently, the conditions for funding are again renegotiated and it is not clear whether yoga will be subsidized in the future as well.

[36] Translated from Deutzmann (2000, 221).

There was such a high demand for yoga that these programs became marketing tools for the health insurance companies to recruit new members. However, the exploding costs in the health sector led to political intervention. When the Reduction of Healthcare Contributions Law (*Beitragsentlastungsgesetz*) was passed, the subsidization of yoga stopped. Deutzmann critically remarks:

> Expenditures on improving health increased from 0.6 billion Deutsche Mark in 1992 to 1.3 billion Deutsche Mark in 1995, and thus effectively more than doubled. A wide range of marketing activities labeled as "health improvements" are currently being financed from combined compulsory contributions, although their primary function is to promote the health insurance companies rather than systematically improve health and prevent illness.[37]

Needless to say many yoga teachers who had been dependent on subsidized courses experienced financial difficulties. Yet the laws changed once more. The preventative healthcare sector was revived after the healthcare reforms were passed in 2000. This time guidelines were produced to guarantee quality control in the preventive care. Its effectiveness had to be proven scientifically. Moreover, only some providers of preventative measures were eligible to offer subsidized courses. Hatha Yoga as a recognized "relaxation method" had to be taught by qualified instructors with a background in education and/or therapy.[38] In addition a prospective instructor should have passed at least 500 h of teacher training. This training had to be carried out by under the auspices of the professional association. The first (and initially only) recognized organization to do so was the BDY (*Berufsverband der Yogalehrenden in Deutschland e.V.*) whose training standards corresponded to those in the health insurances' guidelines.

Preventative measures based on yoga can be funded in two ways: Following the "individual approach" and the "setting approach." In the case of the individual approach, insured members can be partially reimbursed for yoga courses by their health insurance companies.[39] The setting approach, in contrast, allows the funding of institutions, for instance schools to qualify as a "Healthy School" (*Gesundheitsfördernde Schule*). In the latter case, the effectiveness of a particular method has to be proven in particular. Whereas in the first period of funding preventive care, the criteria for quality control were rather low, there were extremely high following the new guidelines. It was impossible for health insurances to redistribute all respective funds to their members. Finally, in 2006 several other organizations besides the

[37] Ibid., 222.

[38] The basic qualification required was an educational background recognized by the state in psycho-social health. Suitable candidates included: Trained psychologists; graduates with a diploma or masters degree in education; qualified social education workers; graduates with a diploma or masters degree in the social sciences; graduates with a diploma or masters degree in health sciences; qualified sports teachers; graduates of sport sciences; sport and gymnastics teachers (qualified teachers or masters graduates) with a focus on health; doctors.

[39] According to current rules health insurance companies can reimburse their members 75 euros per calendar year for measures to promote relaxation.

BDY were approved to offer adequate teacher training and the list of recognized basic qualifications was extended.[40]

Similarly the private market for yoga was expanding dramatically. Following the weekly magazine *Stern*, for example, the BDY estimates that in 2006 three to four million people practiced yoga in Germany.[41] Shortly afterwards, the magazine *Focus* assumed that on the basis of a market research in the city of Hamburg, up to 2.5 million people practice yoga in Germany.[42] The main reason given was the belief that yoga had a positive effect on health.

Yoga Projects for "Healthy Schools"

The developments in the healthcare sector allowed conducting over 20 KOP trainings in German schools during the period 2003–2010.[43] At this time, the German school system became increasingly decentralized and the schools themselves were accorded more independence and decision-making power than ever before. School boards were now able to cooperate on projects with external partners. The healthcare reforms gave the insurance companies both the means and the opportunity to offer financial support to schools; it was thus an auspicious time to implement new plans. Besides, school teachers were searching for help to handle behavioral disorders, lack of concentration, and motor skills dysfunction in children. Relaxation and forms of movement were also regarded as new ways of "rhythmizing" study periods in school.[44] Yoga already had a reputation for solving these kinds of problems, yet the existing range of yoga techniques again needed to be adapted according to the demands.

The Healthy School project was carried out by another large German insurance company, the TK (*Techniker Krankenkasse*). The respective school board had to send their application to the TK, and after its approval could receive up to €5,000. This budget served to pay external yoga instructors and buy equipment. However, the school board had to find another donor who was willing to contribute 10 % of the total expenditure. The aim of the Healthy School project was to initiate a sustained movement towards promoting health and health consciousness among school children. As the requirement for being implemented in schools was the documented

[40] E.g., DYG (Deutsche Yoga Gesellschaft), EYA (European Yoga Alliance), and the Iyengar Yoga Vereinigung Deutschland. The following are now recognized as having appropriate basic qualifications: Teachers, physical therapists, physiotherapists, sports and gymnastics teachers, ergotherapists, remedial teachers, healthcare teachers, and educators. It is also possible to recognize nurses, elderly care assistants, disabled care assistants, family care assistants, social welfare assistants, midwives, masseurs, healthcare managers, and speech therapists.

[41] *Stern*, 3 January 2007.

[42] *Focus* 22, 2007.

[43] KOP was offered by the GZP, Gesellschaft für Zentrierung und Pädagogik, founded in 2003.

[44] "Rhythmizing" refers to structuring the school day and curriculum in a way that alternates phases of concentration and relaxation in accordance with children's needs.

efficacy of the program, KOP did not face difficulties in being accepted. Moreover, KOP could be taught to elementary school teachers who, at a later stage, could develop and modify the program according to their needs. This sustainable effort had to be proven by the school administration in their school profile and also by their membership in the Healthy School national network. KOP was one of the few projects in Germany to fulfill all the criteria and benefit from the funding. Still a great deal of work had to be done by individuals on a voluntary (and unpaid) basis. According to the health insurances' report, in 2003 a total of 148 projects implementing preventive health care (including yoga) were carried out in elementary schools to make them Healthy Schools.[45]

In three cases of KOP in Healthy Schools, the implementation of yoga exercises was again modified in order to include the insights and experiences from earlier programs. KOP had proven to be a highly suitable diagnostic tool for motor skills, psychological, and social disorders. Hence in the recent development of KOP the focus turned even more to postures (*āsana*) suitable for identifying disorders regarding perception, social behavior, and coordination. Moreover, the long-term relationship with one school that participated in both the Municipalities against the Far Right and the Healthy School project allowed for the investigation of long-term effects of KOP conducted solely by the teachers themselves.[46] However, it turned out that Hatha Yoga alone was not sufficient in reaching the high demands raised by schools. Hence two subsequent forms of training were developed and tested, based on drumming and on dance. Respective exercises were integrated and shaped a new form of KOP that now was renamed as training based on Centering Pedagogics (*Zentrierungspädagogik*). New training programs were invented to prepare staff for the many challenges of working on projects in schools, still based on Hatha Yoga, yet also including other methods.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, when only a few individuals were promoting Hatha Yoga methods in school, the process of establishing yoga exercises as a legitimate tool to help children develop started at the bottom of the school hierarchy and gradually

[45] Medizinischer Dienst der Spitzenverände der Krankenkassen (MDS). 2009. *Präventionsbericht 2008: Leistungen der gesetzlichen Krankenversicherung: Primärprävention und betriebliche Gesundheitsförderung*. www.mds-ev.de. Accessed 20 January 2011.

[46] The evaluation of KOP revealed the extent to which Hatha Yoga postures must be carried out correctly if they are to achieve a certain effect. Improvements were recognized in all aspects of posture practice, with the exception of pelvis mobility. It turned out that one teacher suffered from intermittent back pain and had modified the respective postures—seated forward bend (*paś cimottānāsana*), forward bend (*uttānāsana*)—to avoid a personally painful situation. The children had merely imitated her wrong performance of the *āsana*.

achieved recognition among the school management. Now the situation is reversed. Schemes have now been set up by the school at management level and teachers are being encouraged to implement them. Moreover, just as the health insurance companies once used healthcare courses as a marketing tool, many schools now advertise yoga in their school profile, thus attracting potential pupils in times of decreasing population and new competition between schools.

The history of the body-focused program KOP illustrates how the development of yoga in schools has been contingent on the nature of action needed in and by society, and the opportunities that are available for taking this action. The need for action is a prerequisite for the readiness to change within a longstanding environment such as a school. Schools are among the social institutions that are most resistant to change, because they are generally reactive rather than proactive. They accept new content only if there is no other alternative. The openness with which yoga is currently being received in schools would be unimaginable if a need for action did not also exist. Given the serious need for special educational programs aimed at improving concentration, yoga's potential in this sphere will be of great interest to schools. Teachers in Germany frequently complain that their pupils are finding it increasingly difficult to sit still and follow lessons. This is because the musculature of the body's supporting structure must be sufficiently developed in order to be able to sit straight up and still for long periods of time. Moreover, the capacity to concentrate is a precondition for dealing attentively with learning content.

Developing KOP to meet the needs of children and schools entailed a complex process of selecting, adapting, and creatively refining existing yoga methods. As a new method for addressing children's special needs in Germany, yoga was associated with analogous and homologous educational methods that were an established part of the European tradition, such as those propounded by Maria Montessori. Following this approach, I have developed a distinct style within Germany that bears its own name: The specific technique is called *Körperorientiertes Programm* (KOP, body-focused program) within the general field of *Zentrierungspädagogik* (centering pedagogics). The existence of a structural institution was an essential precondition for introducing yoga in German schools, which led to the founding of the non-profit organization *Gesellschaft für Zentrierungspädagogik e.V.* (GZP). A transformational process has seen the term "yoga" being subsumed into the concept of *Zentrierung* (centering). As German state-run schools would not accept the Indian system of teaching yoga in an ashram, a non-profit organization (*eingetragener Verein*) was chosen as the appropriate form for communicating with the schools.

Financial and structural resources are always required if new techniques are to be established. The conditions have been particularly favorable for this since 2003 when yoga was officially recognized as a technique for improving health in Germany. This has led to a significant increase in prestige for yoga, and courses are now subsidized by the German health insurance agencies. Thus, governed by a set of general social, political, and economic conditions, yoga in Germany has managed to take the first steps towards being accepted in important social institutions such as state schools. If this position is to be retained it is essential that efforts to maintain quality control in children's yoga are continued.

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Part III
The Other Consumers: Values, Mobility, and Markets

Consuming Yoga, Conserving the Environment: Transcultural Discourses on Sustainable Living

Sarah Strauss and Laura Mandelbaum

Abstract The practice of yoga in transnational contexts, from North America to Europe to India, has been linked with what has come to be known as the Green movement for environmentally sustainable living. Both this Green movement and the yoga practices that are being mobilized on its behalf are closely connected to the construction of a transnational cosmopolitan middle class that defines itself through particular understandings of health, well-being, and environmentalism. In this paper, we discuss the utility of yoga for both promoting an ecological worldview as well as for linking personal health and well-being with a broader understanding of planetary health; our analysis also highlights the current commercialization of both yoga and the more general health and ecology arenas. In order to do this, we provide both a discursive analysis of web and print media representations of these topics, and also explore the meanings of yoga through ethnographic data collected in a variety of locations between 1992 and 2010. These data were collected among yoga practitioners associated with the training initiated by three major figures in the history of twentieth century yoga, Swami Sivananda, T. Krishnamacharya, and Sri. K. Patabhi Jois. By combining ethnographic research with an examination of text and images, we explore how personal practice and planetary health are linked through the minds, bodies, discourses, and transcultural flows of the yoga world's diverse members.

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Introduction

This paper is the result of an exciting collaboration between an older and younger scholar of the transcultural world of postural yoga. Spanning about two decades of research, it examines the ways that yoga practice and its associated products have moved beyond the context of Hindu India to the global marketplace; much of this transformation occurred in association with the development of the wider "green" turn toward ecological awareness. When Sarah began researching modern yoga in 1992, she had neither the intention nor the expectation that she would include anything specifically related to the environment in her work. She had set out to conduct an ethnographic study of yoga practice in Sivananda's Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, India, but quickly found that staying within the walls of the Sivananda ashram would produce an ethnography that represented only a limited view of the very rich and transcultural Rishikesh yoga scene. Instead, she conducted a multi-sited ethnography of the transnational cultural flows of yoga practice, ultimately published in 2004 as *Positioning Yoga*.[1] While practitioner views of personal health and well-being were integral to the understanding of how yoga had been transformed over the previous century, many of the members of the yoga community described in that book also linked their own health maintenance to wider ecological values, though this was treated only briefly in print.[2] At the time of Sarah's primary data collection (1992–1995), few people in the mainstream of yoga practice, whether in India, Europe, or North America, were making explicit statements about ecology and yoga, though there were definitely some more engaged individuals who were already writing on this theme.[3] Yoga students in the 1990s, from both India and elsewhere, told Sarah that their yoga practice was both for the sake of their own health and that of the planet, exemplifying E. F. Schumacher's exhortation to put one's own house in order, and the rest would follow.[4]

Additionally, yoga was presented by tour operators as well as yoga practitioners, along with trekking, rafting, and other "back-to-nature" activities in Rishikesh in 1992, as clear and obvious shared interests for a certain sector of the global market that would be defined nearly a decade later as "LOHAS," or "Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability."[5] LOHAS is thus a description of a market segment defining a category of consumer, an organization with international scope dedicated to further defining and serving this market, and a product and institutional identity which businesses have adopted as part of a movement toward sustainable business practices of the sort highlighted in Paul Hawken's and the Lovins' work on natural capitalism.[6] Since that time, with the regeneration of the global environmental movement after a period of malaise during the 1990s, the yoga world has developed

[1] Strauss (2004).

[2] Ibid, 130–40.

[3] Skolimowski (1994) and Strauss (2004, 122).

[4] Strauss (2004, 118); Schumacher (1990 [1973]).

[5] Ray and Anderson (2000).

[6] Hawken et al. (1999).

Fig. 1 Green Yoga Association logo (Courtesy: GYA)

a distinctively "green" tinge for at least some portions of the practitioner base; the creation of such organizations as the Green Yoga Association (GYA), discussed in detail below, exemplify this trend.[7] The GYA's logo, below (Fig. 1), makes explicit the connection between human action through postural yoga in the form of the tree pose (*vṛkṣāsana*), with an actual tree as part of the natural world.

Fast forward 15 years to Laura's thesis research in Toronto on Ashtanga Yoga; she has found that the voices of her participants echo many of the themes that Sarah had originally found in her ethnographic work. Moreover, the rapid and intense proliferation of yoga studios within cosmopolitan urban milieus, such as Toronto, suggests that the production and consumption of yoga in a transnational market continues to be a phenomenon that is ripe for academic inquiry. This chapter therefore draws on research that spans two decades, three continents, and a broad range of cosmopolitans in order to explore the complex and fascinating connections that relate discourses of health, wellness, and ecology with one another within a transnational context.[8] Our goal is to show how a significant sector of the modern postural yoga community of practice has become commodified in very specific ways through its association with health and environmental values.

We make use of both textual and web-based analysis, as well as ethnographic research conducted in India, Europe, and North America. Sarah spent most of 1992 in Rishikesh, India, based in three sites including the headquarters of Swami Sivananda's Divine Life Society and two other associated yoga ashrams; she conducted extensive archival as well as ethnographic research with 36 discussants

[7] See Feuerstein and Feuerstein (2007) and Fuerch (2009); http://www.greenyoga.org/home (accessed 4 January 2011).

[8] On the category of cosmopolitans see Hannerz (1993, 252).

between the ages of 25 and 50, observing and participating in yoga classes with many more individuals.[9] This research continued in Europe in 1993 and 1994. Laura conducted 4 months of fieldwork at Yoga Blitz, a pseudonym for an Ashtanga yoga studio in the greater Toronto Area, which follows the teachings of T. Krishnamacharya (1888–1989) in Mysore, India. Peter and Rachel (pseudonyms), a married couple who own the studio, alternate their teaching of the traditional "Mysore" form, in which a student is taught one on one by a teacher, one pose at a time, in a room full of practicing students. Between the months of May and August 2010, Laura observed and participated in yoga classes and philosophy of yoga discussions among the students and instructors of this Ashtanga Yoga studio, conducting 20 formal interviews with yoga students and teachers from this studio. Ranging in age from 21 to 60 years of age, they are not a homogenous group by any means. They are all either engaged in, or have graduated from, post-secondary studies, and come from a background that can be considered broadly middle class. All of Laura's discussants were aware of most of the themes of this research study, and were already involved in the personal process of actively engaging in self reflection regarding the role of yoga in their lives.

Consuming Yoga: The Commodification of Bodily Practice

Around the mid 1990s, yoga started to really hit the mass market, showing up at the front of the airport magazine racks and on television. As yoga's visibility in the international public eye grew, it became an integral part of the marketing opportunity associated with the LOHAS consumer sector, worth some US $290 billion in 2008 and on the rise globally as well, for whom ecotourism, spirituality, alternative health practices, alternative energy and building practices, and "natural lifestyles" are key issues.[10] Yoga products proliferated—clothing, mats, Iyengar-style props—and yoga experiences like retreats also became available all over the world. Though India retained its place in the hierarchy of "authentic" yoga vacations, the degree of commodification surrounding all of these activities increased dramatically.

> Yoga is certainly becoming very commercialized. Going to a yoga class has very much become another type of consumptive activity that you can do for your health and well-being. You can shop at Whole Foods and buy organic food and you can go to a yoga class at the Yoga Sanctuary. It's all part of the things you can purchase for yourself that help your mental and physical well-being.[11]

The above comment was recounted by Terry, a lawyer who has been practicing yoga for over 9 years, almost entirely at Yoga Blitz. Her observation is not atypical

[9] See Strauss (2004) for further information about the original fieldwork. These discussants were of various national origins, including American, German, Indian, and Swiss.

[10] On the LOHAS consumer sector see Ray and Anderson (2000). On LOHAS related marketing data see following web-sources; http://www.lohas.com/research-resources (accessed 24 October 2011).

[11] Interview with Terry (pseudonym), 10 July 2010, Toronto.

from the experiences and comments shared by most of the yoga practitioners Laura observed and interviewed over the summer. Terry's comment astutely points to both the increasing commodification of yoga into a consumptive activity, as well as the emerging popularity of a plethora of health and wellness practices within which yoga is situated: Yoga philosophies are being rendered into a highly marketable commodity in the global market place of alternative health.

The first step in the commodification of something is to turn it into an object, and then to ascribe value to that object.[12] Essentially, whatever it is that is being commodified must become an object in our minds, something that is no longer an invaluable part of a whole, but rather exists in and of itself.[13] The next step in the commodification of a practice entails ascribing monetary value to it, as it becomes a good that can be bought or sold in a capitalist market. In order to analyze yoga as a commodity, it must be transformed by society, both conceptually and practically, into an object—meaning that it is ascribed with monetary value within a capitalist economic system. Yoga has value as a consumable good because of the meanings people derive from it and attach to its consumption, as well as the effects it has for its practitioners.

Commodification, Class, and Self-Identity: Bikram Yoga and Beyond

One example of the commodification of yoga practices and philosophies can be found in the franchised and patented international business of Bikram Hot Yoga, which was created and copyrighted by Bikram Choudhury in Los Angeles. The fact that this system of yoga is copyrighted (and the debates surrounding this) speaks directly to the social transformation of yoga into an objectified practice that can be legally owned, and is therefore entrenched in the legal and political apparatus of property rights. Because the Bikram Yoga series is patented, official Bikram Yoga studios must belong to the Bikram's Yoga College of India (BYCI) network, which, at the time that Allison Fish wrote about this, consisted of over 800 studios in 33 different countries.[14] More updated figures, for example from an article posted on an online business journal written in 2008, estimates that there are "over 1,700 [Bikram] schools, 5,000 certified [Bikram] teachers worldwide, and 500 yoga centers with affiliation agreements."[15]

[12] Taussig (1980).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Fish (2006).

[15] "Yoga's Populous Rise has Bikram's Eyeing Franchising" in http://www.indusbusinessjournal.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications::Article&mid=8F3-A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=89C02FFEDA5E47F5B5ADC91FADAB7647 (accessed 3 January 2011).

Bikram has copyrighted and trademarked the particular sequence of postures that comprises the Bikram primary series, as well as the corresponding pedagogical dialogue. Between 2002 and 2005, BYCI has been involved in two federal court lawsuits, both of which were settled out of court via non-disclosure agreements.[16] What is most significant for the sake of our analysis is that the franchising, copyrighting, and trademarking of a brand name of yoga speaks to the extent to which contemporary transnational yoga is becoming a commercial commodity. Certainly, as discussed earlier on, contemporary transnational yoga is by no means a monolithic or homogenous entity, and as such the case of BYCI cannot be extrapolated to all of contemporary transnational yoga; however, it does illustrate one clear example of the commodification of this style of modern postural yoga.

In *The Social Life of Things*, Appadurai defines commodities as "objects of economic value," and argues that their value exists in the object's cultural biography, that is, its classification, circulation, and, most importantly, the "way in which people's senses of themselves are reflected in and derived from their objects."[17] Subsequently, there have been more than a few conferences revisiting Appadurai's work on this topic; for example, van Binsbergen and his colleagues, including Appadurai himself, have extended the discussion of commodification and consumption in the face of increasing globalization in the decades since *The Social Life of Things* was published, showing "another strategic dimension for highlighting the relation between things-in-motion and human agency."[18] Much conceptual work has been done in economic anthropology and, while there are a variety of perspectives about what commodities are and how they are validated as commodities, there is agreement that the process of commodification is deeply social, cultural, and political (as opposed to simply economic).[19] The social construction of the self through bodily practices is an important aspect of the meaning and value ascribed to yoga. Essentially, when one purchases a yoga pass at a studio, along with a yoga magazine and new exercise gear, one is crafting a specific aspect of one's self identity. For Laura, it became clear as she conducted her observations and interviewed the members of Yoga Blitz that most people who practiced yoga on a regular basis did, in fact, have a specific sense of themselves that was reflected in and derived from their daily commitment to a specific yoga practice.

Diego, for example, has been practicing Ashtanga Yoga for several years, and has completed a yoga teacher's training course in Toronto. His wife is also a yoga teacher and practitioner, yet within a different lineage. For him, although it is difficult to articulate with clarity, there is certainly a sense of self identity to be found in being an Ashtanga Yoga practitioner:

> I don't self identify as a yogi in the spiritual sense, but I do feel that by practicing the way I do and hanging out with the group of people I do I am . . . but when forced to put a definition on it I'm having trouble. To many different people it can be a different thing. For some,

[16] Fish (2006, 195–200).

[17] Appadurai (1986, 135).

[18] Van Binsbergen (2005, 25).

[19] For more on commodities, specifically in a globalizing world, see Hauguerud et al. (2000).

> being a yogi is becoming a commercial thing, for some it's ... I don't know, do you consume it? I mean we identify as Ashtanga [Yoga practitioners], cause we wake up every morning and work ourselves damn hard and there's an identity to that.[20]

Diego also felt that, although yoga might form one aspect of his identity, it is also part of a capitalist economic system, and he identified the consumptive element within yoga:

> You wander in a yoga studio and in order to sell it they set up certain images, certain stages. A yoga studio certainly does look different than a boxing studio—you are having a stage prepared for you.

The consumption of these yoga practices specifically, as well as alternative health more generally, is central to the construction of a newly emerging international bourgeoisie class identity situated within cosmopolitan milieus.[21]

The meanings that practicing yoga can have for a person's self-identity can also be considered part of the repertoire of symbolic capital, since they are linked to social class as per Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of taste and practices as class distinction. In Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of Taste* he conceptualizes taste and preferences in consumption as cultural practices that create a "social hierarchy of tastes," which are parallel to, and reinforce, class hierarchies.[22] As such, class membership is delineated in large part by taste, or manifested cultural preferences. These cultural tastes then become naturalized, embodied daily practices, or *habitus*, at which point class distinctions can be conveyed through the body's physical attributes, manners, and practices.[23] Each social group has its own *habitus*, which can be decoded according to the judgment of taste and practices, rendering individual practices as a site for class distinction. Yoga, and the making of a "yogic body" through lifestyle choices associated with practicing yoga, are therefore valued not only as a fitness fad, but also as part of a bourgeois, cosmopolitan class identity entailing membership in a yogic community of practice, which is available for purchase on the global market of health and wellness.

The above argument linking yoga and class is certainly contestable; however, by simply scanning the list of yoga studios, resorts, and retreats available, and glancing at their prices, the class distinction becomes glaringly evident, since the price of practicing yoga is itself a barrier that only certain, privileged classes can overcome. On average, a pass to a yoga studio in both British Columbia and Toronto ranges from CA$ 150 to CA$ 250 per month, with individual drop-in yoga classes ranging

[20] Interview with Diego (pseudonym), 22 June 2010, Toronto.

[21] Hannerz (1990) and Molz (2006).

[22] Bourdieu (1984, 25, 101–110).

[23] Ibid, 105.

from 16 to 20 dollars each—this drop-in rate is more than double the minimum hourly wage in Toronto.[24] To highlight this issue in our interview, Diego pointed to the premium prices that are charged by the owners of Yoga Blitz:

> The *śālā* [hall] is CA$ 180 per month, but there are only ten people who are authorized in all of Canada! It's a hot commodity—they could charge more and we would probably pay it. But it is a barrier, and time can be a barrier, as well. It can be hard to do yoga and work.[25]

Jay, another respondent who had recently returned from volunteering in Africa and had only been practicing yoga at Yoga Blitz for 2 months, also commented on the commercialization of yoga as an elitist practice with clear connections to class:

> It makes me uncomfortable, the faddish nature of yoga. The image of the California beach bum, surfer, yogi all rolled into one person, and throw in Whole Foods in there. It makes me uncomfortable. It's elitist. It's this concept of health that is snobbish and superior and available only if you have money. Ashtanga Yoga feels very different, it feels authentic.[26]

Ironically, Jay felt that Ashtanga Yoga was "different," that it was not as exclusionary as other forms of commercialized yoga. The irony is that, as Diego pointed out, Ashtanga instructors with the "official" blessing, from Mysore, to teach Ashtanga Yoga are a "hot commodity," and, precisely because there are such few of them, Ashtanga Yoga studios can charge a premium price. Further, because Ashtanga Yoga is based on practicing 6 days a week, many Ashtanga Yoga studios will only accept students who commit to attending 6 days a week, or else will simply not offer punch passes, having only monthly passes instead. Hence, although Jay feels that Ashtanga Yoga is exempt from the "snobbishness" of commercialization, it is, in fact, one of the most exclusive lineages of yoga because of both the price and time commitment involved in practicing this form of yoga.

For practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga, which is an *āsana* (posture) based practice that is quickly growing in popularity within Europe and North America, the authoritative place is the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (AYRI) situated in Mysore, India. At the time of writing (2009), this studio charged US$ 600 per month simply to practice at the studio for 1–2 h a day, not including meals, flight, or accommodation.[27] Furthermore, an internet survey of the plethora of yoga retreats, vacations, and trainings being offered to consumers reveals that they are all sold at prices that create a very real economic barrier and transform the practice of yoga into a luxury, a privilege, and a class distinction.

[24] This estimation of costs was gathered in 2010 by surveying the websites of 25 yoga studios in British Columbia (in Vancouver and the Okanagan), as well as 25 yoga studios in the Greater Toronto Area. Please note that what is presented is a range, not an average.

[25] Interview with Diego (pseudonym), 22 June 2010, Toronto.

[26] Interview with Jay (pseudonym), 25 June 2010, Toronto.

[27] See also Nichter (this volume). Further information on the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute is given on their website: http://www.kpjayi.org/ (accessed 10 December 2009). Price was listed in Indian rupees and calculated in US dollars.

Modernity and the Middle Classes

Under the terms of late, or reflexive, modernity, Scott Lash saw a shift in influence led by the "new" new middle class, i.e. those members of the middle class who have been termed "professionals" (by Ehrenreich) or "symbolic analysts" (by Reich), who are salaried or self-employed, who generally have a high level of formal education, and who have been taught the value of flexibility.[28] The sociological literature on what has been variously labeled the "new" new middle class is vast, and derives from the perceived gap in Marx's polarized vision of the relationship between the proletariat and the capitalists, which failed to account for the increasing number of salaried, white-collar workers in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. During the years following World War II, sociologists like Charles Wright Mills and Hans Gerth compiled landmark studies on the class structure of the United States, in which discussions differentiating various levels of the middle class and their relationship to status in that society predominated.[29] Debates between members of the political right and left about the definition and value of these white-collar employees became heated in the late 1960s and early 1970s with such scholars as Daniel Bell, Alvin Gouldner, Anthony Giddens, Joseph Bensman, and Arthur Vidich, among others, weighing in.[30]

The significance of the debates concerning the "new" new middle class for Sarah's research lies in the fact that the majority of the people who in the period 1992 till 1995 seem to be involved with yoga in Sivananda's tradition can be recognized as having similarities in educational background, occupational preference, and fundamental values, even though they were born into very different cultural traditions and national contexts. Similarly, this observation resonates with the broadly middle-class participant base that Laura interviewed in Toronto over the summer of 2010: Every single one of the 20 participants interviewed had finished post-secondary education, and all of them were either working in a profession (such as lawyer, engineer, or professor), or else currently undergoing postgraduate studies. Although there were some remaining members of the studio who Laura did not have a chance to interview, she was still able to gather through informal conversations and social events that most of them were also either middle-class professionals or students.

[28] See Ehrenreich (1989), Lash (1994, 128–129), Martin (1994, 234–244), and Reich (1992).

[29] See Vidich (1995).

[30] See Bell (1973), Bensman and Vidich (1995), Giddens (1975), Gouldner (1979), and Burris (1986).

Constructing Healthy Selves: Individualizing Discourses of Health and Environmentalism

We do not in any way argue that the individuals discussed above constitute a distinct "new middle" class in Marxist terms, but we do think it is important to explore the significance of these similarities in order to understand who these people are, why they are attracted to yoga, and how they have come to participate in this transnational community of practice. In this section, we therefore draw on the theoretical tools provided by both Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose as we try to interpret and understand the connection between the crafting of the subjectivities of yoga practitioners, and the larger social systems within which these subjectivities exist, including the global economy. In a lecture presented at the University of Vermont in 1982 (first published in 1988) Foucault stated that "my present work deals with the question: How did we directly constitute our identity through certain ethical techniques of the self that developed through Antiquity down till now?"[31] In order to embark on his primary research objective of "sketching out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves," Foucault focused primarily on discourse analysis and genealogical studies.[32] For him, the techniques through which individuals constitute their own self-understanding exist within specific, historically grounded rationalities. In his works on governmentality, Foucault argues that the technologies of the self are inextricably linked with the rationality of government, since government can be seen as a point of convergence where "techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion."[33] We situate the techniques of the self, or strategies through which individuals can effect, by their own means, "a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves" within the context of both government and capital.

Yoga can be understood as one of the mechanisms of the self that Foucault discusses, since the body as the key site for the transformation of the self is a central aspect of yoga; as stated on the website of Yoga Blitz: Yoga can be a "fantastic path towards *personal transformation* and *self realization*."[34] The potential of yoga as a tool for self-transformation was clear for Robin, a music teacher who began practicing Ashtanga Yoga 6 years ago:

> Yoga for me is a huge mirror. And when I started to do yoga, and I saw that mirror, that mirror was fuzzy. With time, when you clean that mirror, you can start to see yourself better. It gets clearer—that's what yoga is, a mirror. Where you can see everything: the

[31] Foucault (2000, 405).

[32] See Foucault (1988, 17–18).

[33] Foucault (1988, 23).

[34] Ashtanga Yoga Shala website 2010; emphasis added. Website not listed and quote slightly changed to preserve anonymity.

> good things, the bad things. And then you can start adjusting what you don't like because then you are aware of it.[35]

For Robin, then, yoga is a tool for self-transformation, which allows her to understand herself with more clarity and honesty, and that understanding helps her to "adjust" the things she does not like about herself. Yoga, then, can be understood as one of those *techniques du corps* (Mauss) that can be used to develop the self, which is transformed through the body.[36] For example, out of the 20 yoga practitioners Laura interviewed, nearly two thirds of the respondents answered that yoga was not only a transformative practice for them, but that one of the things they valued most was the discipline and work ethic that yoga instilled in them.

Valerie, for instance, who has been practicing yoga for over 6 years, explained the numerous ways in which yoga had helped to transform her:

> I stopped smoking, I lost about fifteen kilos, I stopped doing drugs, I stopped drinking for three years (now I am drinking very little), *I have developed self discipline* (something that I never had before). I can accomplish every day being the human being that I want to be, through practice. I am more calm, *more disciplined*, more focused, eat better, feel healthier, more energized.[37]

Valerie was not alone in her response, since Vivian also seemed to value the discipline and structure that yoga brought to her life:

> What I liked about Ashtanga [Yoga] was the routine, which *disciplined myself and my mind. It disciplined me as a person* because it made me go to bed at a certain time, eat the right type of food, get the right hours of sleep, and all of those things, in balance, were ideal for my mind and my body.[38]

Both of these answers are representative of more than half of the responses Laura received in the interviews she conducted.

This emphasis on discipline is at the heart of the importance of situating yoga within a specific political and economic context. To return to Foucault, the techniques through which individuals seek to transform themselves and craft their own self-understanding exist within specific, historically situated rationalities. What is, then, the current situation in Canadian and American society that makes discipline such a positive attribute? What particular rationalities give rise to these constructions of selfhood and understandings of health? What is the discursive context within which the bodily and mental practices of contemporary transnational yoga, as techniques of the self, have become increasingly popular, and how do these converge with neoliberal capitalism and corresponding shifts in state policy? Nikolas Rose's concepts of "ethopolitics" and "somatic selfhood" provide an interesting starting point for answering these questions.[39]

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[35] Interview with Robin (pseudonym), 5 June 2010, Toronto.

[36] Mauss (1973 [1936]).

[37] Interview with Valerie (pseudonym), 22 June 2010, Toronto.

[38] Interview with Vivian (pseudonym), 22 June 2010, Toronto.

[39] Rose (2001).

In "The Politics of Life Itself," Rose traces a shift from "biopolitics" to what he defines as "ethopolitics," where "life itself, as it is lived in its everyday manifestations, is the object of adjudication … ethopolitics concerns itself with the self techniques by which humans should judge themselves and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are."[40] In the past few decades, popular discourses on health have shifted from a focus on preventing illness to an emphasis on optimizing one's overall quality of life by improving the health and wellness of one's body, mind, and spirit. Rose astutely points to this when he notes that

> In the second half of the 20th century … the very idea of health was re-figured—the will to health would not merely seek the avoidance of sickness or premature death, but would encode an optimization of one's own corporality to embrace a kind of overall wellbeing—beauty, success, happiness, sexuality, and much more.[41]

It is precisely this promotion of overall well-being that is one of the central selling features of contemporary transnational yoga. This discourse regarding holistic health has become increasingly hegemonic in tandem with a growing industry of alternative health and wellness products, as well the LOHAS movement, and, as Rose argues, "by the start of the twenty-first century, hopes, fears, decisions, and life routines shaped in terms of the risks and possibilities in corporeal and biological existence had come to supplant almost all others as organizing principles of a life of prudence, responsibility, and choice."[42] These discourses take as their subject, and simultaneously create said subject, a "self" that is centered around an individual's body, psyche, and behavior—what Rose identifies as an "intrinsically somatic selfhood … in which the body has become the key site for transformation."[43]

How this "self" is understood is tied to a specific socio-cultural context. In the case of contemporary transnational yoga, the role of neoliberal capitalism cannot be ignored. Indeed, it is difficult to separate yoga's impetus for continual self-improvement and self-transformation from the capitalistic and neoliberal ideology of self-reliance, hard work, and individualism; yet, if ideologies exist they exist only so far as they are legitimizing particular material conditions, in which case the question arises of what conditions are legitimized by this neoliberal ideology of selfhood. We argue that this ideology legitimizes the pulling back of the welfare state from its responsibility for ensuring the health of its citizens, since it posits that the responsibility of one's health, and the health of one's family, rests firmly on the shoulders of each individual's choices in regards to consumption and lifestyle practices. Essentially, one's health is one's own responsibility, and the achievement of overall well-being is increasingly seen as an individual success or failure.

[40] Ibid, 18.

[41] Rose (2001, 17).

[42] Rose (2001, 18).

[43] Ibid.

Within this context, implementing some form of alternative health practice into daily life is perceived as a moral duty and responsibility to one's health, to be achieved through transcultural practices that promise self-transformation and individual life enhancement.[44] At the same time, however, "the state is no longer expected to resolve society's needs for health" since it has, in fact, freed itself from many of the health-promoting responsibilities that it had acquired during the twentieth century.[45] We believe that this is particularly true since the turn to neoliberalism in the late 1980s. Thus, there is a distancing of the neoliberal state, at least in Canada and the United States, from its social responsibility in facilitating health-promoting practices, while, simultaneously, there is an increasing pressure placed on individuals to engage in health-enhancing activities.[46] The former cannot occur without the latter, since without a social welfare system that provides for the health needs of a society the very practices that individuals are encouraged to embark on are often inaccessible due to material limitations. Even though there are many structural barriers that prevent people from engaging in alternative health practices, the manner in which health has been naturalized as a personal choice and responsibility results in placing the culpability for disease squarely on the shoulders of the diseased.

It is here, within this discourse of health centered around techniques for improving the "somatic" self, that contemporary transnational yoga has become increasingly popular as a bodily practice that promises to transform the self into a well-balanced individual. In a sense, the conceptualizations of selfhood that are produced within yoga converge with neoliberal constructions of selfhood, and these discourses are therefore mutually reinforcing and constantly reproduced. Ultimately, this highly individualized construction of the self, which posits the responsibility of overall well-being on one's own choices, legitimates the increasing deterioration of state responsibility for the health of the members of its society, and also reproduces class distinction in its most embodied form—the health-enhancing practices that can lead to well-being are available only to those who can afford both the fee and the time that they require. In Canada, achieving an idealized healthy body and balanced mind through the consumption of transnational bodily practices such as yoga is a luxury only a few can afford—it is nothing less than health reconstituted as class distinction.[47]

[44] Lau (1998, 167).

[45] Rose (2001, 6).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Bourdieu (1984).

Commodification and Environmentalism

The carbon footprint associated with yoga practice grew in the same exponential way that its practitioner base increased. Yet, when asked about health, yoga, and spirituality, many of the answers conveyed by respondents were intertwined with particular philosophies of nature, ecology, and environmentalism. When we think about the practice of what has come to be known as modern postural yoga[48] in relation to the environment, a few distinct poses come to mind—perhaps the tree pose (*vṛkṣāsana*) or the mountain pose (*tāḍāsana*), postures that metaphorically stand for familiar aspects of the natural world, as in the GYA's logo, above. Or perhaps the sun salutation (*sūryanamaskār*), which is only recently seen as being linked to Vedic hymns to the sun god Sūrya (Goldberg). Certainly, it is easy enough to derive a strong imperative for environmentally conscious living from the Hindu philosophical context within which yoga was developed. In Nelson's edited volume on Hinduism and ecology, a number of scholars and activists have made the association between these two domains.[49] Most notable here would be Chapple's call for an "indigenous Indian environmentalism" which is specifically supported by a yogic perspective; the "ultimate goal of Yoga . . . involves the cultivation of a higher awareness, which, from an environmental perspective, might be seen as an ability to rise above the sorts of consumptive material concerns that can be harmful to the ecosystem."[50] More recently, we have seen calls for an explicit "eco" or "green" yoga, as well as the founding of organizations to promote environmentally-friendly yoga practice (e.g., the GYA) or explicit environmentally related statements in existing organizations to reflect a greener orientation. In this India-based website, we learn that "yoga offers us the tools and the guidance to craft health on every level, and gives us the ability to live happily and in harmony with our natural environment and all of our fellow beings. . . . In short, yoga offers us a holistic, nurturing and evolutionary 'way of living'."[51]

The sheer amount of goods now associated with yoga is partly related to the "props" used in Iyengar Yoga practice—blocks, straps, pillows, and blankets—but specific yoga "fashions" have evolved as well, as noted in a 2010 National Public Radio story by an American journalist of Indian origin: "I am just amazed at all the . . . stuff. Yoga tops, bottoms, blankets, mats. My vision of a yogi was a guy in the forest, sitting on a piece of tree bark—or in the deluxe version, a deerskin. He didn't have a yoga mat carrier!"[52] Initially, none of the special yoga clothing or products advertised in *Yoga Journal* or other popular magazines were made of organic or otherwise sustainable materials, and the travel associated with yoga retreats in ever

[48] De Michelis (2004).

[49] See Nelson (1998).

[50] Chapple (1998, 30, 29–31).

[51] http://www.discover-yoga-online.com/what-is-yoga.html (accessed 6 January 2011).

[52] http://www.npr.org/2010/12/29/132207910/yoga-a-positively-un-indian-experience?sc=emaf (accessed 6 January 2011).

more exotic locales added carbon to the atmosphere at a rapid pace. While yoga was certainly associated with the LOHAS population as it emerged in the 1990s, it was not because of the way that yoga was practiced at that time; environmental values may have been seen as inherent in the philosophical basis for yoga, as discussed above with respect to Chapple, as well as in Sherma's work on Tantric ecofeminism, but were not so evident in its global expression.[53] However, by the time the annual American LOHAS meeting, held in Boulder (Colorado), came around in 2008, yoga was not merely one of the health fads that comprised the LOHAS market, but an integral part of both the products and the entrepreneurial practices of the organization itself. Each day of sessions started out with a yoga class, and one of the conference sessions was devoted to teaching business people how to incorporate yogic values in their workplaces.

LOHAS itself is an interesting concept. First derived from social science research defining an emergent market sector, LOHAS has come to be defined in different ways. It is an umbrella under which many different previously separated markets come together (health, environment, social responsibility), and has been incarnated in the United States as an organization with members comprised of companies with LOHAS products to sell, marketing firms interested in promoting such products, and practitioners.[54] As a non-membership organization, LOHAS produces a journal and an annual conference, and provides a website for business listings and discussion. However, the concept has grown far beyond the definition in academic terms and the subsequent institutional structure created to support the newly defined market sector. It has taken on its own life and identity, with an emergent transcultural community that sees value in this new framework and definition.

And this trend is evident not only in the United States, but elsewhere around the world.[55] A description of the LOHAS logo gives a sense of the Japanese interpretation of the LOHAS goals: "Colorful flower images inspired by smiling faces represent happy LOHAS life. Five smiling petal flowers stands for five LOHAS categories, as well as the oriental Ying-Yang and five elements, Wood, Fire, Soil, Gold, and Water. The triple ring expresses the 'Triple Bottomline' of economy, environment, and society."[56] Similarly, in Taiwan, the national tourist bureau has used the concept of LOHAS to promote both traditional and modern Taiwanese activities, including yoga and health practices, as well as ecotourism.[57]

One piece of Sarah's 1990s research that was not explored fully in *Positioning Yoga* was a broader discussion of the similarities across the populations of German-speaking, American, and Indian yoga practitioners involved in Sivananda's orbit.

[53] See Chapple (1998) and Sherma (1998).

[54] http://www.lohas.com/mission.htm (accessed 5 January 2011).

[55] Cf. http://lohas-ba.org/english/; http://www.japanfs.org/en_/newsletter/200606-1.html (accessed 5 January 2011).

[56] http://lohas-ba.org/english/ (accessed 6 January 2011).

[57] http://eng.taiwan.net.tw/m1.aspx?sNo=0002036 (accessed 6 Jan 2011).

Like many of Laura's Canadian discussants in Toronto, most of the people who had chosen to come to Rishikesh to practice yoga, whether from Europe, America, elsewhere in India, or Rishikesh itself, shared certain characteristics that fit into the LOHAS market base. In addition, they tended to be well-educated professionals, not necessarily having a high income, but having had the education that would have made them eligible for such a status had they chosen to pursue it. They worked overwhelmingly in the service sector, either in health, social services, education, or tourism. If they were not from India, they were likely to be women. Indeed, though they did not constitute a class in the usual sense of the word, they fit many of the characteristics of a "new" middle class not only in Europe and the United States, but also in India—a sector that has been described in a variety of ways during the 1970, 1980, and 1990s just prior to the LOHAS values-based analysis. [58]

Class and Being Modern

In her book, *The Post-Modern and the Post-Industrial*, Margaret Rose cites Toynbee extensively to demonstrate that

> . . . the word "modern" in the term "Modern Western Civilization," can, without inaccuracy, be given a more precise and concrete connotation by being translated "middle class," "Western communities became 'modern' in the accepted Modern Western meaning of the word, just as soon as they succeeded in producing a bourgeoisie that was both numerous enough and competent enough to become the predominant element in Society".[59]

So, a linkage between "middle-class" lifestyles and "modernity" is not without precedent. But how does a society acquire a middle class? Krishan Kumar answers this by pointing out the inseparability of modernity and industrialism, which he sees as ideological and material forms of the same revolution.[60] The ideological belief in progress and "the continuous creation of new things," coupled with the technological advances that make such creation possible, together create the will and the opportunity for people to raise their standard of living.[61] Yet these same people who achieve a certain level of material wealth often become dissatisfied with certain other features of modern, industrial life. They are the ones who have the leisure to evaluate and comment upon the state of their world, and sufficient means—which could come in the form of educational, symbolic, or other cultural forms capital as well as financial power—to translate their musings into a real impact on their world.[62] It is clear that this group shares a great deal in common with those who

[58] On the "new" middle class in India see, for example, Singh (1985) and Vidich (1995).

[59] Rose (1991, 9).

[60] Kumar (1995, 82–83).

[61] Ibid., 81.

[62] On cultural capital see Bourdieu (1984).

have in the twenty-first century come to be defined as the LOHAS market and, increasingly, a transnational and transcultural community of yoga practitioners.

This market sector has been long in the making. Edward Bellamy captures the same sense of dissatisfaction in his novel *Looking Backward*, a utopian vision of Boston in the year 2000 from the vantage point of a young doctor born in 1857.[63] Bellamy's vision of the direction America should take resonated with the general public's concerns of the day; the novel was wildly popular, not only in the United States, but around the world. This account, although fictional, serves well to describe the conditions under which Swami Vivekananda arrived in the United States five short years following the initial publication of Bellamy's book. While his primary purpose was to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions at the Chicago World's Fair, Vivekananda also visited with private, generally well-to-do, citizens in Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The people into whose homes he came seem, from their descriptions, remarkably similar to members of the 1887 Boston society described in *Looking Backward*.[64] Such similarities may point to the reason why Vivekananda's American hosts sought alternative visions of the way the world should work, whether from reading Bellamy, listening to Vivekananda and taking up his practices, or following one of the New Thought, Spiritualist, or other emergent movement leaders who offered forms of practice often radically different from the context within which these members of established society grew up.

Now we can leap ahead 100 years to the mid-1990s. Following the spate of sociological literature on the "new" new middle class, a sociologist and a psychologist, Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson, conducted a values assessment study in the mid 1990s, which placed Americans in categories of "traditional," "modern," and "creative."[65] This was reported in a book called *The Cultural Creatives*; this group transcended traditional socioeconomic categories, sharing features of the political right and left. Overall, the "cultural creative" turned out to be the drivers of the LOHAS market, for which yoga and other alternative health practices, sustainability or ecological sensitivity, spirituality, alternative energy and "authenticity" are key elements which are explicitly listed as the core components of the LOHAS designation.[66] Many manufacturers and practitioners jumped on the bandwagon, anticipating the extraordinarily strong market that awaited their goods and services. The LOHAS market is also more than 60 % female, with a strong interest in books and the arts, as well as good food.[67] More recently, Ray and Anderson

[63] Bellamy (1995).

[64] Atulananda (1988) and Chattopadhyaya (1993).

[65] Ray and Anderson (2000).

[66] http://www.lohas.com/about.html (accessed 5 January 2011).

[67] On statistics related to the Cultural Creatives in 2008 see http://www.integralpartnerships.com/content/view/45/1/ (accessed 4 January 2011).

have continued their research and added a consulting element, shifting their focus to what they see as an emergent "integral culture."[68]

LOHAS and the Yoga Community of Practice

As we have seen, the practice of yoga in recent decades is, to a great extent, a middle-class phenomenon. Yoga practitioners in both India and the West, especially those associated with Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and similar teachers, like Pattabhi Jois and other followers of Krishnamacharya, tend to be educated people with at least some discretionary income for travel and leisure. By the standards applicable to their countries of origin, they are neither at the very bottom nor the very top of the economic hierarchy. Even those individuals who learn yoga techniques from a book, video, TV show, or website, and never make the face-to-face acquaintance of other yoga practitioners, recognize the existence in the world of other people who share knowledge of the same bodily techniques they have learned. Once a certain mastery of the techniques presented through these various media has been achieved, many of these individuals seek out other yoga practitioners, both to advance their skills and to discuss the implications of these practices for their health or lives in general. Many people who are exposed to yoga learn to practice it in the company of others, through one of the many yoga classes that are now widely available around the world. There is, then, a connective thread of "transculturality" that links all of these practitioners, since, as Welsch (referring to Wittgenstein) asserts, "culture is at hand whenever practices in life are shared."[69]

While the practices of the individuals with whom we are here concerned do not vary tremendously from place to place, the significances attached to them shift according to local culture and historical context. In this way, we suggest that the transnational community of yoga practitioners resonates with Welsch's notion of transculturality, as being composed of "transcultural networks, which have some things in common while differing in others, showing overlaps and distinctions at the same time."[70] Members of the community of practice, then, share a lexicon of postures and practices, with variably overlapping interpretations of these acts. Not all yoga practitioners are "seekers" in the Western New Age sense of the term, relentlessly pursuing a spiritual path, self-consciously questing for enlightenment which will free them from the bounds of that very self; neither are they all Hindu fundamentalists, nor yet all physical fitness fanatics questing for immortality.[71] Most of the practitioners we have spoken with have no intention of renouncing this world, and indeed, as they see it, the practice of yoga is quite specifically a way of

[68] See http://www.goethe.de/ins/ca/tor/prj/eds/the/leb/en2424837.htm (accessed 7 January 2011).
[69] Welsch (1999, 8).
[70] Ibid., 9.
[71] Howell (1995).

living "in" this world. For example, Robert, one of the respondents Laura interviewed, explained the connections that, for him, united yoga, nature, and living "in" this world:

> My main problem with spirituality is that it is separate from nature. I like the idea that nature is seen as divine, and that the divine is seen as nature, and it's a very different worldview when you appreciate that nothing but perception is going to change ... I don't believe in re-incarnation for sure, ... *I'm not seeking to liberate myself from life, I'm seeking to be in deeper relationship with life*. Which is not a new idea. There are a lot of schools in yoga that subscribe to this. Tantra is about liberating oneself in life. Tantra was about liberation from illusions, the other schools are about liberation from illusion so you can escape this *māyā* [illusion], this materiality, because materiality is suffering. I disagree with this idea and find it offensive. This idea that we should escape nature has led us to disregard nature to the point that we end up in the environmental situation we find ourselves in.[72]

As the above quote illustrates, the goal of achieving "self-realization" while still participating in worldly social life, *jīvanmukhti*, is one which is defined in the ancient texts, but which has taken on new meanings in the contemporary world. Robert's discussion also makes explicit the connection between yoga, self-realization, and the environment that is increasingly being made by contemporary yoga practitioners. Despite the emphasis on self, these practitioners are not alone; rather, they belong to a broadly defined community of practice, for which yoga has become a signature *techniques du corps*.

We can use Tönnies' 1887 definition of *Gemeinschaft* to establish that there are many different types of community: Of blood, of place, and of mind. It is this last that provides the basis for a community of practice, for Tönnies tells us that

> ... a community of mind comes most easily into existence when crafts or callings are the same or of similar nature. Such a tie, however, must be made and maintained through easy and frequent meetings, which are most likely to take place in a town ... Such good spirit, therefore, is not bound to any place but lives in the conscience of its worshippers and accompanies them on their travels to foreign countries. Thus those who are brethren of such a common faith feel, like members of the same craft or rank, everywhere united by a spiritual bond and the co-operation in a common task ... spiritual friendship forms a kind of invisible scene or meeting which has to be kept alive by artistic intuition and creative will.[73]

Extending the definition from "crafts and callings"—professions, religion, or rank—to other kinds of shared practice requires no artifice. Likewise, it takes little effort to imagine that while towns were the most obvious place for the "easy and frequent meetings" required to maintain these relationships a century ago, new forms of communication and speeds of travel have permitted new ways of keeping such associations alive. While Tönnies may have been concerned with the differentiation between "traditional" and "modern" societies, giving the weight of *Gemeinschaft* to the former and of *Gesellschaft* to the latter, it seems fair at this point to suggest that a shift in orientation has occurred, and that new, composite

[72] Interview with Robert (pseudonym), 22 June 2010, Toronto.

[73] Tönnies (1957 [1887], 43).

forms of community are being formed, with virtual interactions on the web and the sporadic interaction of individuals engaged in what I have elsewhere called "oasis regimes" in places like Rishikesh becoming equally as important as local connections.[74] The LOHAS market share, and within that, the community of yoga practitioners, is certainly one of these. And, though we started out by speaking primarily of the American and Canadian LOHAS market, this group is recognized in every country with a middle class, from China and India to Western Europe and South America. LOHAS marketing websites are found everywhere, in all of the major languages, as various references throughout this chapter demonstrate.

To think about this community of practice more precisely, we call to mind the model of a speech community. Individuals may belong to multiple speech communities, engaging in similar speech patterns or dialects with particular groups of people who may be connected by geographical locale, occupation, cultural background, age, gender, class, or any of a number of such cross-cutting categories.[75] In early sociolinguistic work, as in earlier examples of anthropological research, the notion of studying a community through the ethnographic method of participant observation required firm anchoring in a specific locale. In the last decade or two, operational definitions of "community" have begun to loosen so that recent editions of the *Oxford Desk Dictionary of American English*, while maintaining the link between community and locale in its primary definition, focuses on shared beliefs, practices, and interests in the second and third definitions of community.[76]

Becoming Ecological: Green Yoga

So, we can see that there was a community of yoga practitioners that developed over the past century, and this community was part of a larger group of mostly middle-class people who were dissatisfied with some of the impacts of modernity, whether directly on the environment or on people's interface with the environment, through technology. By the end of the twentieth century, this dissatisfaction had converged with a general scientific consensus on topics such as anthropogenic climate change, and other problems of pollution and resources. One Indian company that is promoting yoga as well as other health and environmental products to the LOHAS market is T. Spiritual World (TSW), in business since 1986.[77] While TSW, a publicly traded company, primarily emphasizes the health and wellness market, it also invests in sustainability activities.[78] Yoga practitioners began to

[74] See Etzioni (1993).

[75] Hymes (1974).

[76] Abate (1997).

[77] http://www.tspiritualworld.com/investor/spiritmkt.htm (accessed 7 January 2011).

[78] http://www.tspiritualworld.com/investor/indianmkt.htm (accessed 7 January 2011).

realize that they needed to "walk the walk" and make their practice match their lofty ideas of a monistic unity with the world around, the *Umwelt*.[79] Chris Chapple, in a recent post on the GYA's website, commented that "A group of yogis from Los Angeles has joined a group from Chennai, Hyderabad, and Delhi for a 10 day training and retreat with Srivatsa Ramaswami in Delhi and Rishikesh. As we move through the various *vinyasas* and *pranayamas*, and as we chant various *mantras* to move forward in our practice, one [sic] cannot help but feel deep within the connection between the body and Mother Earth."[80] This connection between yoga and the natural word is also echoed in the responses of many of Laura's respondents, for example when in Robert's discussion with Laura (above), when he states that "I like the idea that nature is seen as divine, and that the divine is seen as nature."

The Green Yoga Association was formed in 2003 to promote environmentally friendly yoga practice and now has 340 teachers listed in their directory. It is open to all and supports the integration of environmental values and practices with yoga practice by individuals and studios. According to their website, membership dues are used to support the elimination of plastic water bottles from yoga events and studios; the removal of PVC and harmful chemicals out of yoga props; the education and support of yoga professionals regarding sustainable practices; and the planting of fruit trees to offset carbon "and demonstrate Yoga/Permaculture."[81]

The GYA philosophy, as presented on their website, is as follows:

> The health of our bodies depends on clean air, clean water, and clean food. Yoga is grounded in an understanding of this interconnection. Historically, Yoga developed in the context of a close relationship with the earth and cosmos and a profound reverence for animals, plants, soil, water, and air. This reverence towards life is the basis of the Yogic teaching of ahimsa, or non-violence, non-injury, and non-harming.
>
> Today, the viability of earth's life systems is in danger. If humanity is to survive and thrive, we must learn to live in balance with nature. Now is the time to cleanse and heal the earth and to establish a sustainable relationship with the environment for generations to come.
>
> Therefore, as practitioners of Yoga we will:
>
> - Educate ourselves about the needs of the biosphere as a whole and our local ecosystems in particular.
> - Cultivate an appreciation for and conscious connection with the natural environments in which we live, including animals, plants, soil, water, and air.
> - Include care for the environment in our discussion of Yogic ethical practices.
> - Commit ourselves to policies, products, and actions that minimize environmental harm and maximize environmental benefit.
> - And if we are Yoga teachers or centers, we will incorporate these commitments into our work with students.[82]

[79] The fact that the yoga of Patañjali was a dualistic project, and not of the *advaita* tradition that Vivekananda promoted is a story for another day; here, we will go with the version of yoga that has been gaining popularity since the early twenty-first century.

[80] http://www.greenyoga.org/about-greenyoga/136-dispatch-from-india (accessed 6 January 2011).

[81] http://www.greenyoga.org/donate/ (accessed 7 January 2011).

[82] http://www.greenyoga.org/about-greenyoga/51-green-yoga-values-statement (accessed 6 January 2011).

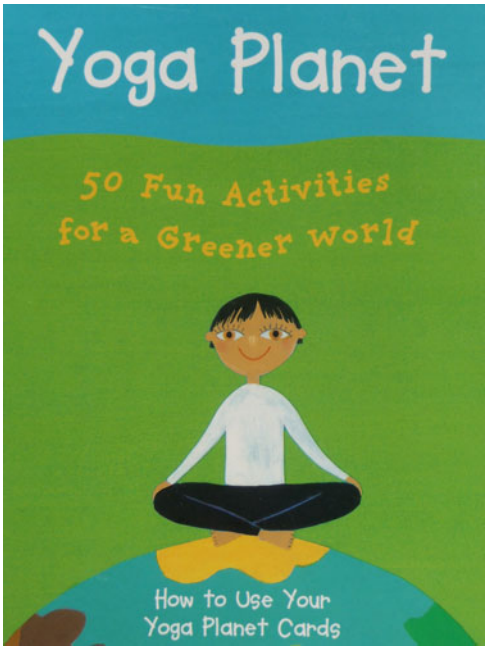

Fig. 2 Yoga Planet cards for children (Courtesy: Barefoot Books)

The Green Yoga Association now certifies products and yoga schools as being "green"; some products that have been developed are the "Eco Yoga mat," and many different lines of organic clothing.[83]

Another line of product meant to support both environmental and yoga practice targets children: a package of yoga activity cards called "Yoga Planet" (Fig. 2). The instructions on these cards espouse not only environmentally friendly practices, but also the interconnection between people and their environment, as discussed in the GYA mission statement, above. They instruct the practitioner that "Yoga is about awareness, balance, relationship, and connection: with ourselves, with society, and with the planet."[84] As one breathes in and out—the yogic practice of *prāṇāyāma*—the relationship between the air outside and the breath inside is felt directly, just as when one stands barefoot on the ground at a yoga retreat on the beach to do the mountain pose (*tāḍāsana)* or the tree pose (*vṛkṣāsana*), the connection with the earth is intensified. In the cases of both the GYA and the Yoga Planet cards, we can see a co-mingling of the values of health and environmentalism with the commodification of yoga and its associated products. Both are earnest in their efforts to effect change at the level of the individual behavior and identity—fostering a "conscious

[83] These mats are marketed from Great Britain; see http://www.ecoyoga.co.uk/ (accessed 6 January 2011).

[84] *Yoga Planet Activity Cards*, Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books, 2008.

connection with the natural environments in which we live" in the case of GYA, as cited above. Likewise, the Yoga Planet cards packaging informs us that "Yoga enhances our physical, mental, and emotional vitality and cultivates inner peace and awareness. All of us can embody these qualities and skills that both enrich our lives, and prepare us to help restore the health of our planet and create a sustainable future." Both of these are also geared toward cementing a change in yoga culture through education, whether of individual children or of all yoga students, through the exemplary practices and studio management of their instructors.

In 2009, a book came out in Germany that claims a universal fix through Green Yoga, which is defined as showing the way to "a complete integrated life-practice that brings together not only yoga and ecology, but also inside and outside, individual and collective development."[85] The author, Hardy Fürch, introduces a cartoon character named eco-yogi Gaiananda to promote an integral yoga practice derived from that of Sri Aurobindo, which had also been an inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi. On the last page of the book, he proposes that yoga practitioners lead the grassroots charge for a "green new deal"—and then, saying that this may seem an overoptimistic response to the world's problems, quotes Barack Obama "Yes we can!."[86] In much more modest terms, philosopher Henryk Skolinowski had made the same suggestion with his book *EcoYoga* in 1994, but that volume was more along the lines of Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, suggesting that we all need to get our own houses/bodies in order before the world can change.

We can find many examples of the ways that people in different places are practicing the same kind of yoga-based planetary therapy that Gaiananda professes in *Wie Green Yoga die Welt verändert*. One noteworthy example is an American group that has been driving around the country in a biodiesel bus, selling "I love Yoga" t-shirts and giving classes to promote alternative energy and world peace. They are now trying to raise funds for another effort, ongoing in Kenya, to provide health and education services to youth, including teaching yoga.[87] Another effort, the Eco Yoga Village endeavor, is taking place in a variety of locations around the world, in India and Europe as well as a wide range of locales in Latin America.[88] This organization combines yoga practice, vegetarianism, recycling, and other sustainable living practices as a way of creating transcultural yoga communities in rural and urban contexts where Western volunteers can support and learn from local residents to the benefit of all. Each of these organizations demonstrates a simultaneous commitment to environmental and health values, using the practice of yoga as a vehicle to achieve both personal health and wider planetary goals of peace, energy efficiency, and environmental preservation/conservation.

[85] Fürch (2009, 10); author translation from the original: "... Green Yoga [wird] eine ganzheitliche, *integrale Lebenspraxis* aufgezeigt, die nicht nur Yoga und Ökologie, sondern gleichfalls Innen und Außen, individuelle und kollektive Entwicklung zusammengeführt." (emphasis in original).

[86] Fürch (2009, 91).

[87] See http://satnamexpress.com/?page_id=2 (accessed 6 January 2011).

[88] http://ecological-farms.blogspot.com/2009/02/who-we-are.html (accessed 6 January 2011).

Conclusion

Yoga is, then, an emblematic example of Welsch's model of "transculturality," in which "cultural connections" extend far beyond state borders, and play a decisive role in our identity formation.[89] In each of the cases described in the previous sections, from Ashtanga and Bikram Yoga, to Yoga Planet cards to eco-yogi Gaiananda and the eco-yoga bus, a wider transcultural community of yoga practitioners is being developed and supported in service of a linked set of goals designed to maximize both personal and planetary health. These examples highlight a trend that has been under way for at least 20 years, using the power of the global market to simultaneously generate revenue and shift cultural practices and identities toward a unified framework for action, using modern postural yoga as the foundation.

At the same time, the very concepts of health, both personal and planetary, that are being mobilized, hinge on particular constructions of selfhood and behavior that personalize responsibility for our bodies and our earth. The social context within which these discourses of health and environmentalism are becoming hegemonic—in this case, neoliberal capitalism and the explosive growth of a global market place of health and environmentally conscious products —is central to understanding the changes in the meaning of yoga that have occurred in the last two decades. In so saying, we do not intend to claim that the yoga practitioners we describe are not deeply and ideationally committed to their practice, but rather question why and how that commitment came to be. From these varied examples, we can see that yoga has become much more than a Maussian *technique du corps* in the twenty-first century, and has now been transformed into what we might identify as a *technique du monde*, mobilizing individuals into communities of practice with a goal of transforming global cultures.

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[89] Welsch (1999).

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The Social Life of Yoga: Exploring Transcultural Flows in India

Mimi Nichter

Abstract This paper draws on fieldwork at the K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute (KPJAYI) in Mysore, South India and in the surrounding community. The purpose of the paper is twofold. First, I describe the social life of yoga as experienced by different types of global health tourists who arrive in India with an array of expectations, differing agenda, and an imaginary of India. Second, I provide observations about Indian entrepreneurs and cultural brokers who flourish on the edges of the yoga school and interface regularly with the foreign yoga students. Based on participant observation and in-depth interviews, I present a heuristic of Western yoga students in Mysore: (1) the yoga tourist or "yoga lites," (2) the yoga traveler, (3) the yoga practitioner "going to the source," and (4) the yoga professional. These categories allow me to draw attention to the heterogeneity of yoga students and to highlight ruptures and frictions in the transnational flows of ideas and concepts. I also briefly discuss the practice of yoga in cosmopolitan India among middle-class women.

Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s, I conducted long term ethnographic research on local health cultures in coastal Karnataka in South India.[1] Occasionally, I left the villages where I worked and traveled to Mysore, a traditional city about 5 h from my field site. By the early 1990s I experienced a noticeable change in the city. Alighting at the main bus stand, I was now greeted by rickshaw drivers and touts who approached me asking "yoga, yoga?" Mysore was in the process of becoming the

[1] Nichter and Nichter (2001), Nichter and Nichter (2010).

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epicenter for yoga for the foreign traveler, and Indians who were engaged in the business of tourism were all too ready to direct me to appropriate yoga destinations. I also observed that the burgeoning interest in yoga in the West was resulting in a revitalization of the practice of yoga in cosmopolitan India.

Over time, as I developed a yoga practice in the United States and continued to do health-related research in India, I became increasingly interested in transnational yoga flows. In the spring of 2009, I enrolled as a student at the Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute (KJPAYI) in Mysore. My goal for studying there was to conduct pilot research about the motives and practices of international yoga tourists and practitioners who were flocking in increasing numbers to Mysore. Additionally, I wanted to make ethnographic observations of the response of the local Indian community to the phenomena. To this end, I practiced yoga and conducted formal and informal interviews with foreign students as well as with Indians who had established businesses near the institute offering eclectic services to Western students. I engaged in participant observation in the yoga school as well as on the street. My focus in this paper is twofold: First, I unpack the social life of yoga as experienced by Westerners who arrive in India with an array of expectations, differing agenda, and an imaginary of India. Second, I provide observations about Indian entrepreneurs and cultural brokers who flourish on the edges of the yoga studio, interfacing with foreigners and offering them an array of "authentic" Indian experiences ranging from ayurvedic treatments, Sanskrit classes and chanting, Indian philosophy, *prāṇāyāma*, Indian cooking, and mandala (*maṇḍala*) drawing. I also briefly discuss the practice of yoga among the Indian community.

As a heuristic, I describe four broad categories of Westerners who come to India to study yoga: (1) the yoga tourist, (2) the traveler for whom yoga is a conduit into Indian culture, (3) the yoga practitioner who is "going to the source," and (4) the yoga professional. I use these categories as a way to highlight several different streams of yoga practitioners. In this paper, I concentrate on the third group as those people were the most numerous types in Mysore during the time I was studying there. Although the first category, the yoga tourist, typically does not come to study at KPJAYI in Mysore—at least not at present—I describe this group to provide background to the larger yoga scene unfolding in India today.

The international attraction of Mysore was recently featured in the travel section of the *New York Times*, which listed Mysore as one of the top 20 places in the world to visit in 2010. "Yogis seeking transcontinental bliss are heading to Mysore, the City of Palaces, in southern India," the description read.[2] The short blurb went on to praise the potential of a yogic pilgrimage to practice Ashtanga Yoga, described as a "rigorous sweat-producing, breath-synchronizing regimen of poses." After yoga class, the article suggested, one could partake in a potpourri of exotic experiences ranging from ayurvedic treatments, to the study of Sanskrit, or visiting a palace. Introduced in this cavalier manner, the austerity and difficulty of this yoga practice was minimized and a trip to Mysore appeared to be for every "body."

[2] "Best Places to go in 2010," in *New York Times*, 10 January 2010.

The Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute

The institute was founded by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (1915–2009) in 1948. His grandson, Sharath Rangaswamy, now serves as director and is assisted by his mother (Jois' daughter), Saraswathi. Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (referred to by his students as "Guruji,") respected teacher, was a Karnatak Brahmin who studied with the yoga master Krishnamacharya for 25 years. A scholar of yoga and Sanskrit, Jois taught for many years at the Sanskrit college in Mysore, and began teaching yoga to Western students in India in the mid 1960s. In 1975, he made his first trip to the United States to teach yoga, although at the time he was relatively unknown.[3] For most of his life, Pattabhi Jois taught yoga from his home, where 15 students at a time would practice in a small room, often in multiple batches throughout the morning. Over the years, his popularity grew and he became increasingly well known to practitioners around the world through his international workshops. Flows of students began to arrive to study in Mysore.

In 2002, the Jois family moved to a wealthy suburb of Mysore, where they built a multi-storied building with a large room to accommodate the hundreds of students who were now coming regularly to study with Jois.[4] During the high season, there can be approximately 400 foreign students, mostly Westerners, registered for classes at KPJAYI in a given month. To study there, one must sign up for a minimum of 1 month of classes, which in 2009 cost approximately $600 (US). One also signs a waiver of exclusivity that they will not practice at other studios during their stay in Mysore. Practice occurs in the early morning and the rest of a student's day is free to fill in with activities that suit their interests. Students need to find their own accommodation and food, but community residents have rapidly renovated their homes to accommodate yoga students in private rooms with high-speed internet connections.

The practice room is large and bright, accommodating 50–60 students. During the busy season, the *śālā* (literally, the hall, referring to the space where students practice) is full with practitioners from 4:30 a.m. extending till 10 a.m. with students completing their practice and others beginning theirs. While waiting for a spot to lay down one's mat, a student has an opportunity to observe other practitioners on their mats, all of whom are at different points in the fixed sequence of Ashtanga Yoga poses. Once one enters and begins her or his own practice, there is little opportunity to carefully observe anyone else although the energy in the room is palpable. Unlike many yoga classes in the West which are over 80 % women, and often taught by women, at least half of the students at KPJAYI are men.[5]

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[3] Jois (2002).

[4] Smith (2007) provides a detailed description of studies at the KPJAYI *śālā*.

[5] Birdee et al. (2008). See also Andrew Tilin's report "Where Are All the Men?" in *Yoga Journal*, 20 March 2007. That Pattabhi Jois and his grandson, Sharath Rangaswamy, are both male may also account for the attraction of Ashtanga Yoga to men.

For most students at KPJAYI, the postures and rigid sequencing has been learned and memorized elsewhere, as there is little formal instruction in the *śālā* itself.[6] Rather, a yoga student goes through the established sequence of *āsana* and linking breath and movements (*vinyāsa*) in the primary series and stops at the final pose they have been taught. Sometimes students receive hands on adjustments or assistance in performing a pose from the teacher during the class. A teacher-led class—a concept popular in the West—is 'led' in name only once a week in the *śālā*, when the names of the *āsana* and the count of the *vinyāsa* breaths are called out by the guru in Sanskrit and the assembled students practice the pose together at the same time.

Attracting the Yoga Tourist: Yoga Lite

Health tourism is a burgeoning business in India today, and yoga has increasingly become commodified for foreign and national tourists. Transnational interactions are immediately evident in the marketing of yoga as both a commercial and spiritual product. The *Incredible India* website, the main portal of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, features a well-known American yoga teacher (Shiva Rea), in a short colorful video, dressed in traditionally colored guru garb, albeit with a distinctly Western twist. She dons bright, orange, tightly-fitting yoga clothes (her own well-marketed brand) and is shown practicing advanced *āsana* on remote mountaintops of the Himalayas and near sacred rivers. Her message, rather ironically, is that yoga is accessible to all and that the place one needs to experience it is in India. For the would-be yogi, the Ministry of Tourism website offers a "yoga quiz" to determine what style of yoga might be suitable for you, dependant on such variables as the type of activity you like, what clothes you wear when exercising, etc.[7] For reading on the topic of yoga, the Ministry recommends Western guides to yoga hotspots such as *From Here to Nirvana: The Essential Guide to the Yogis and Gurus, Ashrams and Temples of Spiritual India* alongside classic texts such as *Light on Yoga*.[8] It is noteworthy that of four recommended texts on yoga, only one is

[6] Although the Ashtanga Yoga series is taught in a specific sequence, it is important to note that the practice of Ashtanga Yoga has been changed considerably over time, which is why the center was previously called the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute. According to long term practitioners, Pattabhi Jois adapted many components of the series over time.

[7] The use of the internet to advertise a wide variety of yoga learning opportunities in India represents a significant departure from the early 1990s. In her book, *Positioning Yoga*, Sarah Strauss (2005) notes that in the course of conducting research she visited several tourist offices in North India and Government of India information offices in Europe and North America. When she inquired where she should learn yoga in India, for the most part she was referred to "the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh." Clearly, the sites where one can learn yoga in India has expanded greatly in the past 15 years.

[8] Cushman and Jones (1998), see Iyengar (1988).

authored by an Indian. Clearly, this repackaging of yoga into a highly accessible activity offers great potential for health tourism, as India attempts to capitalize on a product which is uniquely theirs.[9]

There are many different levels of yoga tourism in India today. Of late, notions of the yoga retreat in austere Himalayan ashrams have been transformed into a new breed of "ultra-luxury yoga retreats."[10] For example, a 14-day yoga package at a Himalayan destination spa, which comes with a personal breathing and meditation instructor, a villa with private pool, and two ayurvedic massages costs over $14,000. High-end designer retreats are custom tailored to the individual, so rather than needing to learn a practice, a teacher creates a program suitable to your needs. Like having a personal trainer, your Indian coaches are there to help you achieve your goals. Spa culture including yoga classes and ayurvedic treatment and massage are expanding exponentially across the subcontinent, appealing to an elite global market comprised of Westerners, NRIs (non-resident Indians), and upper- and middle-class Indian nationals.

In addition to these ultra-luxury yoga vacations for yoga practitioners with deep pockets, there are also multiple workshops offered throughout the year, typically in beach resort areas. These workshops are taught by popular foreign yoga teachers (some of whom teach Ashtanga Yoga) and appeal to a global audience who come to India for 1 or 2 weeks to study yoga. Classes are typically offered in the morning providing ample time for relaxation and pampering. These prepackaged yoga tours provide an entry level experience to the reality of India, offering a sheltered, peaceful haven where all one's basic needs are provided resulting in little need to venture into the India beyond the spa gates. During such workshops, some yoga tourists learn of other opportunities to study in India, gain confidence about traveling, and later return to have a different type of experience. One older American man described his earlier 1-week workshop experience in Goa as "summer camp" noting that "it was a great and safe introduction to India."

The Yoga Traveler

Many of those at KPJAYI are yoga travelers. This is a broad category, including repeat travelers to India, and first-time visitors looking for a respite from the arduous work and upheaval that characterizes low-budget travel in the country. Typically, these backpackers had learned about studying yoga in Mysore from travel books like *Lonely Planet* and from travelers' blogs, and most had little prior

[9] For a discussion of the legal fights that have emerged over branding yoga, see Fish (2006). Recently, the Hindu American Foundation has taken up the question of who owns yoga and has launched a movement called "Take Back Yoga." Their main concern is that "yoga has thrived but Hinduism has lost control of its brand." *The New York Times*, 27 November 2010.

[10] See Jerry Guo's article on "Upmarket-Facing Do (the Good Life)," in *Newsweek International*, 5 July 2010.

yoga experience. Beyond the KPJAYI, which is certainly the most well-known and prestigious of the yoga centers in Mysore, there are numerous teachers offering classes in diverse styles of yoga, and the internet makes it easy to plan one's stay online. Because practice time at the *śālā* was in the morning, yoga travelers had time to experience other "traditional" Indian teachings available in the area.

The story told to me by a 27-year-old Spanish student captures the experience of a traveler who heard about Ashtanga Yoga in Mysore and decided to study at the *śālā*. His decision to travel around India was made shortly after his long-term girlfriend had broken up with him. In his mind, India was a place where one could become immersed in the culture and forget one's problems. Raoul had taken a few Ashtanga Yoga classes in his native Madrid. The idea of staying in one place where he could study yoga and other aspects of Indian culture and also be surrounded by other travelers appealed to him.

On his first day of practice at KPJAYI, Raoul was confused as to what he should do as everyone was at a different point in the practice and there was no teacher guiding the class. Observing his confusion, the teacher, Sharath, taught him sun salutation A (*sūryanamaskār* A), the first pose in the series which he practiced several times before he was told that he was done for the day. Other travelers who were unfamiliar with the Ashtanga Yoga series, related similar stories of being given one pose which they would repeat several times for their first few days, resulting in a practice of about 15 min. This style of teaching was not what most students expected to find at the *śālā*, and while it appealed to some, it did not appeal to others who desired hands-on verbal training in yoga postures and some lectures on yogic philosophy.

Raoul decided to extend his stay at the *śālā* beyond the month because he enjoyed meeting other yoga students after class. He spent several hours each morning at a popular café where one could find foods produced for Western palates. He enjoyed the ethos of the yoga community and had several sessions with a past life regression counselor which he found helpful in understanding difficulties in his present day relationships. He was also attending classes in Indian philosophy. What appealed to him was the entire package, an experience he did not find when he was on the road in India.

Scott, a 40-year-old American traveler, had attended a 1-week workshop in Goa with an Ashtanga Yoga teacher and was on a return trip to India. His motivation for staying in Mysore for a month was that he had a break from work and had been traveling around India in the hopes of recovering from a broken heart. In his interview, he explained:

> Coming to India removes me from my emotional pain. All this hard-core travel that you do here, you just have to look, look, look around and everything is so different that it's just kind of cathartic. Everything is upside down here: what is being sold on the street and in stores, the rickshaws that drive you around, the cows in the middle of the road, just everything. Being in India lets me put everything else aside and when I go back home, I feel like I've been away a really long time.

Like the other yoga travelers, Scott found that Mysore was a good respite from arduous travel. While yoga was an additional "perk," he felt that it was not the sole reason for staying in Mysore:

> I can do yoga at home and doing Mysore-style yoga in the U.S. is not so different than doing Mysore here. It's not like they're really hands on here, but you do get the energy of all those hard-core yogis when you're in that room. It's almost like a *darśan*. For me, what is different here is that I can also eat *dosai* and *idli*, watch bodies being burned, and just be around all this intense culture.[11] I also meet lots of interesting people and get to hang out with them.

The journey to India, as described by these yoga travelers, may be considered a secular ritual that serves as a counterpoint to everyday life or as a personal transition or rite of passage at a particular point in one's life.[12] In addition to the relaxation that comes from settling in to a place for a period of time, the yoga traveler may also seek this experience in an effort to see themselves from a different perspective.

Going to the Source

Most of the people I interviewed at the institute were in this category of dedicated yoga practitioners who had established, long-term daily or near daily practices of Ashtanga Yoga prior to coming to Mysore. They distinguished themselves from those who took "yoga vacations" in places like Goa or Bali, and referred to their own practice at the *śālā* as being a "no frills" more basic experience. Most of these foreign yoga students had attended numerous workshops in their native countries with senior Ashtanga Yoga teachers, and had prepared themselves for the trip by talking with their teachers and other yoga practitioners who had practiced at the *śālā* before. Several had completed a teacher training course in their country, and some were teaching Hatha Yoga or Ashtanga-based yoga part-time, as an adjunct to their "real job." Melanie, a 30-year-old American woman explained that it was her experience as a yoga teacher that inspired her trip to India:

> After teaching for a while, it just did not feel authentic anymore to me to teach anyone else. I felt the need to meet my teacher's teacher. I needed to understand what that relationship was all about. I wanted to understand the passing on of information in the Indian way, to see where this yoga came from, and who practices it. Where I practice in the States there is a lot of light-heartedness. Here you meet people from studios all over the world and you see a lot of advanced people. Coming here demonstrates a level of commitment to the practice.

[11] Scott's statement "It's almost like a *darśan*" literally means "It's almost like seeing the divine." *Darśan* is a Sanskrit term which in the Hindu ritual tradition refers to religious seeing, or auspicious sight. Thus, Chris describes being with advanced practitioners and the teachers in the *śālā* as a form of auspicious sighting. *Dosai* and *idli* are two popular South Indian breakfast foods prepared from rice flour.

[12] Nash (1996).

This "lack of authenticity" experienced by practitioners who have learned yoga only outside of India was echoed in several interviews. A person who had an "authentic yoga practice" was described as a person who "lives what they teach," and "who has spent a long time in India and paid their dues." Having traveled to India to study yoga "at the source" conferred legitimacy and a credential, "a badge of authenticity and deeper knowledge about the practice."

Similarly, "going to the source" was also cited as a reason for coming to Mysore by Jenna, a Finnish woman. Although she had practiced regularly for several years and attended workshops with Pattabhi Jois in Europe, she sensed that her practice was not authentic, which to her meant that "it was more external than internal." She explained how this had changed after her first trip to the *śālā* 1 year ago:

> I became more committed to my yoga. After being in Mysore, yoga was more a part of my everyday life and it felt deeper in me. Before I came here, my practice was very physical, strenuous and external. It was like once I got the connection here, my yoga went inside my body. This visit I know that I am even more connected.

Not only did she feel her connection to the physical space of the *śālā* where she learned from the vigor of more advanced yoga practitioners, she also liked the feeling of connection with a guru. Jenna explained:

> It's having a guru, a teacher, a lineage. It's not something we have in our country. In Finland, we don't have the type of relationships where people eat dinners every night and have close ties with family and their grandparents. When you're eighteen, you move out of your parents' home and you live by yourself; you are independent and free. In some ways it's good but it makes everyone separated. So the young people are living alone. For me here in India, it's about the teacher and the lineage. Having that connection with a teacher here, I don't feel a need to talk and ask questions. I just have to do the practice.

Thus, studying at the *śālā* resonated with her not only because of the teacher-student (*guru-śiṣyā)* relationship, but because it situated her in a lineage which she could no longer experience within her own kin network and wider community in Finland. The Mysore community—literally, a community of practice—filled this need for her.

The importance of the connection with a lineage and going to the source was also emphasized by Angela, a 32-year-old American woman who was visiting Mysore for the first time. She had discovered Ashtanga Yoga in Los Angeles 5 years before and had immediately experienced it as a refuge after "corporate yoga" where she felt disturbed by the scripting of the practice (referring to Bikram Yoga).

> I prefer to practice with those who have paid their dues and who know the culture from which yoga comes. A lot of the yoga studios in L.A. sell beauty; they try to sell self-control. I just don't resonate with them. I like those who are ascetic and who take that as their frame of reference for doing yoga.

Angela had come to Mysore because she "liked the association with old secret knowledge, the silent practice and the fact that there was a guru." Beyond the value of the lineage, other informants talked about the connection of Ashtanga Yoga to

"ancient philosophical texts," even if the source could not be authenticated.[13] Others explained that they had come to Mysore because they felt that "it was their time." For example, a 35-year-old German woman, Kerstin, a professional athlete turned yoga practitioner who was visiting Mysore for the first time, explained her motivation for coming:

> It was time to taste the birthplace of Ashtanga [Yoga], not just to go to workshops. I've been practicing this yoga for three years and there's a point when you just want to come here. If you want to know the sweetness of sugar, you have to taste it, and that's it. Like that, if you want to know what Ashtanga [Yoga] is really about, you have to come to Mysore to experience it. I wanted to go beyond the intellectual. I've read so much about yoga but I wanted to feel it more inside. I've started to feel and understand more since I came a month ago.

Like other Ashtanga Yoga practitioners, Kerstin spoke of how the daily practice of working with the "gross physical body" was leading her to an awareness of the more "subtle inner body." She had not experienced any "transformational breakthroughs" in Mysore; indeed, she recognized—as many other practitioners I spoke with—that any changes she experienced in India would be better understood over time. Kerstin did however feel that yoga was more "easily digested" in India because she had the time after her practice to absorb what she had experienced on the mat. "I can't practice like this at home," she mused. "Here I can take a full rest after class. I don't have to run off to work and do a million things. I can let the experience of the yoga, whatever happened on the mat, just settle in."

Culture, Gender, and Generation on the Mat

Some of the yoga practitioners who had gone "to the source" made interesting observations about cultural and gender differences they observed among Ashtanga Yoga students both from their own country and from other regions of the world. While I recognize the need to be cautious about essentializing cultural difference, interview data revealed some interesting, if preliminary, observations about how people from different countries responded to Ashtanga Yoga. Several informants talked about how Ashtanga Yoga seemed to match an aspect of their national character, resulting in its popularity. For example, Jenna from Finland observed:

Ashtanga [Yoga] is very popular in Finland because it is a highly structured practice. Finns practice it precisely. They do their breathing and the *āsana*—they can focus on that. We like someone to tell us what to do and we like to follow. We listen carefully, we concentrate on that strictly, we do what we are told. Ashtanga [Yoga] suits us well.

[13] The reference here, which emerged in several interviews, is to the *Yoga Kurunta*, supposed to be the ancient text which Krishnamacharya (guru of Sri Pattabhi Jois) received through his own guru in the early 1900s and passed down to Jois (see Sjoman 1999; Smith 2007).

She went on to describe American practitioners, whom she felt were more interested in the spiritual aspects of yoga. "I'm surprised when I hear how Americans can talk openly about the spiritual side of yoga. We Finns don't like to do that." Reminiscent of this observation of Finnish Ashtanga Yoga followers, Haruko, a Japanese practitioner explained that in Tokyo many students were attracted to the physical form of the practice, not the spiritual component. "Japanese like the rules of Ashtanga [Yoga], but they don't think about what's going on inside. We are very obedient and we like to follow what we are told very carefully. We are anxious to improve, to get to the next series. We always want new poses." Haruko had hoped there would be more discussion of yogic philosophy and the deeper purpose of the practice. "When I am done with my practice and I'm standing outside the *śālā*, other Japanese students will comment on my flexibility or ask me what pose I'm up to in the series. I feel like there's a lot of competition to get ahead."

Daniel, an Austrian man who had been living in San Francisco for several years explained that although he had been practicing Ashtanga Yoga for many years, he had not wanted to study in Mysore because he received good instruction in California where he also attended workshops which offered "good concentrated knowledge." Daniel knew Pattabhi Jois did not speak much English and he preferred teachers who could articulate clearly what the precise bodily movements should be, and how to get into particular poses. As he explained,

> I didn't understand that there could be other forms of teaching that were valuable. In Western culture, information is passed on verbally. I had not experienced a form of teaching that depended on the presence of the person and observing how the person conveys the teaching inside the setting. Being in Mysore, I have begun to appreciate other ways a student can learn.

Studying at the *śālā*, he became cognizant of how Sharath could "skillfully read the students." Daniel stated:

> It's like if you have too much ego and you're showing off… even if you are practicing beautifully, he may not give you a posture. I don't know how he does it but he is working with expectations all the time. It's hard to explain. Everybody hangs on his every word and movement in the *śālā*. There's a total teacher-student relationship, which doesn't really exist in yoga classes outside of here.

Several experienced practitioners who had studied with Pattabhi Jois before his passing, also described how he was "a master at seeing people's strengths… at reading their energy" and how his teaching was hands on with little verbal instruction. This is captured succinctly in his famous aphorism: "Yoga is 99% practice and 1% theory." In daily afternoon meetings which Jois used to hold with students, he would resist answering questions about body positioning (how are you supposed to rotate your internal thigh in this posture?), yogic philosophy, and any of the more cerebral components of the practice. Anthropologist Benjamin Smith who also conducted fieldwork at KPJAYI observed that the greatest emphasis in

Mysore-style practice is on "haptic communication, involving somatic involvement by the student of their own body as well as somatic attention to the body of the teachers."[14]

For some students, particularly North American males, the nature of the *guru-śiṣyā* relationship was uncomfortable. John, a Canadian student, captured this skepticism in his observations of the *śālā*. While he enjoyed the practice of Ashtanga Yoga and felt he was on a "spiritual quest," he could not relate to what he observed was the "blind belief" of other students. Raised an atheist, John was dismayed by others who he felt were enthralled with a yoga guru and a foreign belief system.

> I don't feel comfortable with the way people are with Sharath. . . the idea that this is *the only way*, the only yoga, that it's so exclusive. I didn't like signing a waiver not to practice any other yoga here in Mysore, and I feel uncomfortable when I see people bowing at the door as they enter and leave the *śālā*. Just to be so captivated with a person or a belief system. I can't be that led. I have my own individuality.

This struggle between being an individual and being a devotee (*bhakta*) was expressed by several other North American males who retained a skepticism towards accepting a guru. The idea of surrendering to the feet of a master was in direct contrast to notions of hyper-individualism that are an important component of identity projects in the West. While some people accepted that poses were given when one was ready to learn them, other students were anxious to "nail a pose" so they could move on in the series. Some who were tied to a culture of achievement found the system of "being given poses when you were ready" frustrating, as they felt they could handle much more than they were given.[15] In contrast, a *bhakta* of the practice was upset by questions he was asked by other students which tried to place them in a hierarchy, such as "What pose are you up to? How long have you been practicing? How many assists have you gotten since you've been here?" To these devotees, such questions represented competition and comparison; traits which they believed were "anti-yogic."

Several women spoke about their surprise at the behavior of some students at the *śālā*, mostly belonging to what I have categorized as "yoga travelers." As Katherine, an American woman, explained:

> I didn't think I'd find myself in a subculture of Westerners on vacation. There are tons of parties here and lots of drugs. They say "what happens in Mysore stays in Mysore." People come here to cheat on their partners back home. There are just lots and lots of hookups. Mysore is a den of illusion.

By calling the Mysore scene a den of illusion, Katherine is referring to the differing types of people who come to study at KPJAYI and how it is important to see that they are not a homogenous group. Many of those who have to come to study are not "hard-core yogis" but are actually looking for a good time. In a similar vein,

[14] Smith (2007, 35).

[15] Smith 2008 also discusses the issue of ego and frustration among yoga students based on what they perceive to be lack of recognition of their hard earned abilities in the practice.

Nicole, a nutritionist from Canada visiting Mysore for the third time expressed concern about students who were supposed to be "into their bodies" but showed disregard for their health. She observed that some travelers put themselves on cleanses, sometimes consuming sugar cane juice and chili powder for days on end in an effort to "detoxify" themselves.[16] She noted:

> I've seen lots of people here who smoke weed in quantity, drink alcohol, and smoke cigarettes. Then they think if they do a juice cleanse, it will balance out all these impurities... it's a Western mentality, they just want a quick fix. It's like people think they can spend their time partying, then in the morning go to class and then do a cleanse... it really bothers me. If they're smoking cigarettes, don't they think their lungs are full of tar and nicotine? If you think drinking sugar cane juice or tender coconuts will cleanse all the stuff out of your body... well, it just doesn't work that way.

The Professional Yogi: From Blessing to Certification

Over the past decade, obtaining the proper credentials has become an important part of being a teacher of Ashtanga Yoga.[17] Previously, when there were fewer students at KPJAYI, one needed to receive the blessing from Pattabhi Jois to be able to teach Ashtanga Yoga in the manner in which they had been taught. This blessing was given to some long-term students who had apprenticed not only with the physical *āsana* practice but who had become true devotees of the tradition and were believed to have embraced Indian culture. Karen, an advanced practitioner who had been visiting India for many years, explained how she had gotten certified to teach Ashtanga Yoga in the 1990s:

> It was very different than compared to now. At a certain point, I realized that I had gone to India and studied with Guruji many times, and that since I was teaching at home, it would be good to get authorized. I wrote Guruji a letter and listed all the times I had studied there and requested his blessing to teach. The *śālā* was a small and intimate experience back then and he knew me well. He sent me his blessing to teach. Now you can't ask for it, you can only get it when they say you are ready to have it.

In Western countries, one can take a teacher training course in Ashtanga Yoga but these courses are not recognized officially by the KPJAYI. Indeed, certificates gained from study with various senior level Ashtanga Yoga teachers in the United States (even from those teachers authorized and certified by Pattabhi Jois) typically do not bear the name of Ashtanga Yoga, but rather the name of the teacher with whom one studied. It is worth noting that over the last several years, a strict

[16] This cleanse appears to be of Western origins where it is sometimes dubbed the "master cleanser diet" or the "lemonade diet," for those who make it in the West where lemons are substituted for sugar cane. It is believed that this diet eliminates toxins from the body and cleans the kidneys and digestive system.

[17] While this distinction is important for the hierarchy of teachers, it is less so for students who may not understand the subtleness of these distinctions.

authorization and certification process has been set in place by the KPJAYI. On their website, it states that to be an "authorized" teacher requires at least four extended trips to India for at least 2 months each time, and that one needs to achieve a certain level of proficiency in the primary series. However, having fulfilled these requirements does not constitute authorization to teach; one has to have embodied the practice according to the lineage, and obtain the blessing of the director. To date, approximately 200 students worldwide have achieved this recognition. Beyond basic authorization is a higher level of "certified" teacher which requires that one has made more than eight annual trips to KPJAYI, had over 10 years of *āsana* experience, and is proficient in at least the first three series. There are approximately 40 of these highly advanced Ashtanga Yoga teachers globally. This formal process of authorization and certification serves a gatekeeping function for Ashtanga Yoga and represents an effort to enforce a level of quality control on who can officially teach the practice and precisely how they do so.[18] This is becoming increasingly challenging as one finds Ashtanga Yoga (or Ashtanga-based) teaching training courses advertised on the internet by various teachers. The branding of particular types of yoga has become a contentious debate as does what constitutes adequate or appropriate training for various systems of yoga.[19]

My observation about the activities of "professional yogis" outside of the *śālā* is that many are actively engaged with serious study related to yoga. As frequent travelers to Mysore, some study individually or in small group settings with a Sanskrit scholar in order to better understand the *Yogasūtra* and to learn to chant verses from key texts. The important distinction to be posited is that these highly dedicated students are involved in long term study activities in Mysore.

Outside the *śālā* Gates

Indian entrepreneurs and cultural brokers have embraced the opportunity to provide an array of activities for Western yoga enthusiasts. As yoga students have their days free after about 10 a.m., they have much time to participate in seemingly Indian or at least "yogic" experiences for the body and mind. There is a dizzying array of possibilities offered by the local community: Hindu philosophy; past life healing therapy; ayurvedic, Swedish, and Thai massage; reiki; chanting; Sanskrit classes; classical dance; Indian style painting, cooking, etc. While some of these activities (i.e., reiki, Swedish massage) were not Indian in origin, they had been Indianized. With all these offerings, over-scheduling was a common problem among students with several complaining of exhaustion from taking rickshaws from one activity to

[18] One advanced practitioner suggested that this pattern of level one and two certification mirrors the type of teacher training offered in the Iyengar Yoga tradition, which maintains a very strict control over their teachers.

[19] See Fish (2006).

the next. For students who had little travel experience in India, these activities provided safe interactional spaces in which to connect with "Indian culture"; meeting spaces for imagined worlds. Below I describe two activities which were discussed commonly by informants and are offered as examples of popular adventures.

Studying Indian Philosophy

One French yoga beginner was surprised by the type of teaching he found at the Ashtanga Yoga *śālā*. He questioned "Where is the philosophy, the meditation, the explanations about *āsana* practice?" Similarly, other students who wanted to increase their understanding of Indian philosophy as it related to yoga attended informal lectures at the home of a retired philosophy professor. This Indian scholar had spent extensive time with Western students and was able to skillfully decode complex concepts from Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* in ways that were comprehensible to foreigners. For example, in one lecture he analogized the path to *samādhi* to the desire to drink coffee at Starbucks, explaining three of the eight limbs of *aṣṭāṇgayoga—dhāraṇā* (concentration of mind), *dhyāna* (focusing on a single point), and finally *samādhi* (blending and becoming one with the object of concentration) in terms of thinking about, having intense desire for, and finally obtaining and consuming a cappuccino. At the end of the session, students actively engaged in asking questions about the lecture as well as other topics which ranged from the mundane (How much sleep does a yoga student need?) to the more esoteric (How do I know who is my guru?; How will I know when I have reached self-actualization?), to which he responded with culturally appropriate answers.

Ayurveda

Yoga has become a conduit for ayurveda, as many foreigners have gained awareness of the Indian system of medicine only after beginning their practice. Appealing to yoga tourists, some Indian tour companies suggest that "traditional ayurvedic oil massage, *sirodhara* [sic], be on the agenda of everyone visiting India, as it is helpful in curing and restoring the physique." In Mysore, many yoga students embrace ayurvedic massage as a before and after treatment to their practice and a health-promoting practice in its own right. While several KPJAYI students who received ayurvedic massage from local therapists appreciated the restorative care, others who went to ayurvedic spas were troubled by their commercialization.

The interaction between a foreigner and an ayurvedic practitioner typically began with an in-depth consultation where the individual was asked a multitude of questions on topics such as digestion, defecation, and sleep cycle. Kevin, a Canadian yoga student, explained that despite the fact that when he consulted the

practitioner he was feeling very well and only wanted to cleanse his body of toxins and have a massage, he was prescribed ten days of varying massage treatments, several ayurvedic rejuvenation medicines, and a suggestion that he should move into their residential facility so he could be more closely observed and obtain more treatments ("for full benefit"), as necessary. Amused by this interaction, he successfully negotiated for fewer and less costly services. However, he expressed surprise that there had been no discussion of his *doṣa*, which he thought was central to ayurvedic diagnosis. I heard similar stories about "being sold ayurveda" from several yoga students, and some were particularly disheartened when they were advised to sign up for an ayurvedic course "as if you could learn all about it in a few sessions." One man commented:

> I'm a little down on all the commercialism... I want to find places where real Indians go when they want to get fixed. I'm tired of all these places which just want to sell you their products... I thought ayurveda was a serious medical practice where they analyzed your body type and talked about your *doṣa*. That's not what I find here.

Several women who had sought treatment at ayurvedic spas remarked that in addition to being sold herbal medicine, they were also recommended an array of herbal beauty products for skin purification and enhancement.

Reiki Treatments

While there were several reiki teachers in Mysore, a husband-wife team who worked out of their home was particularly popular. Their poster, visible in several restaurants and shops where yoga students visited, advertised their treatments: "Reiki, Realize your potential; cure your chronic diseases, overcome relationship problems; achieve your goals; become positive." The husband served as the gatekeeper for his wife's hands-on treatments, conducting an initial intake interview with the continual stream of clients. His diagnosis often referred to the concept of chakra (*cakra*), i.e. whirls of energy and their blockage ("your throat chakra is blocked"; "your solar plexus is misaligned") which could be rectified through reiki.[20] This technique, first developed in Japan, was linked to Indian culture, in part through a visual presentation of the Indian pantheon of deities visible on the altar in the treatment room. As observed by Thomas, an American yoga student who had been getting daily treatments:

[20] The conjoining of the Indian chakra concept (energy centers) with some modern forms of the system of reiki has been going on for many years. When the chakras are diagnosed as blocked, the reiki master can work on moving the energy and removing the blockage. Reiki training has been popular in South India for over a decade, and I have known ayurvedic practitioners in Karnataka who have taken short courses in reiki and incorporated it into their practice.

> Here in India it seems like reiki is a catchall for everything New Age. It has crystals, pyramids, incense. . . there's Ramakrishna, Shiva, Ganesh and lots of other Indian gods too. In the U.S., I probably wouldn't do this, but here it's cheap and available.

Like practicing yoga, local treatments also required daily body work. Joanna, a British woman who was having regular reiki treatments explained how this practitioner had "been working to realign all her chakras." She explained "I have time here so I can spend it on myself. The treatment is affordable. Other people I know liked this practitioner so I came. Because of my yoga, I'm more open to something happening in my body. . . I have more faith that it will work." Joanna expressed fear in going to an astrologer who might tell her about her future, or to take part in a past life regression treatment; she preferred to work "in the present moment."

Indians Practicing Yoga

Yoga is enjoying increased popularity in urban areas in India, particularly among middle- and upper-class women. It has become normative to take yoga classes, which can now be found in gyms, yoga schools, spas, and in storefronts where yoga is part of a package of other modern "hobbies" for women including cooking classes, astrology, beauty classes, and dance. In Mysore, estimates are that there are over 500 yoga teachers, some of whom teach foreign students, and many who serve the Indian population.[21] Several factors contribute to the growing popularity of yoga including (1) the increasing flow of foreigners who come regularly to study yoga heightening local interest in the tradition; (2) rising health and beauty consciousness among Indians; and (3) increased stressors of daily life.

An Indian male yoga instructor whom I interviewed in Mysore estimated that over 50% of his students (all of whom were women) practiced yoga to lose weight. Many Indian women believe that yoga is helpful for a range of physical complaints including poor digestion, menstrual problems, hormonal imbalances, low back pain, and diabetes, a disease which is particularly prevalent among the middle and upper classes. Yoga may also serve as an antidote to boredom for married women who otherwise have limited access to activities outside the home. Attending yoga classes was seen as an acceptable behavior for women particularly in conservative cities such as Mysore. In her research on Sivananada Yoga, Sarah Strauss found that all of the women who practiced yoga in Rishikesh, "whether practicing at home or taking classes, felt that yoga was primarily beneficial as a way of losing weight or staying fit, but with the added benefit of relaxing the mind, and being slower and gentler than some of the all-women aerobic classes available."[22] Strauss contends that the spiritual component of Sivananda Yoga was less important to women than the physical benefits, a factor she attributes to the availability of

[21] See Sugata Srinivasaraju's article on "Sandalwood Simhasana" in the Indian popular weekly magazine *Outlook India*, 16 January 2006.

[22] Strauss (2005, 77).

spiritual activities in other arenas of their lives. Based on my research in Mysore, I would concur with her observations. One of the "yoga professionals" I interviewed had been asked by several of her Indian women friends in Mysore if she could teach them yoga postures. She commented that their main motivation for learning was that they had "become fatty" and hoped that yoga would help them reduce weight.

Unlike the KPJAYI where foreign students practiced a fixed sequence of poses for 1–2 h, Chandra, a Hatha Yoga instructor explained that he eased his Indian students (mostly housewives) into a practice: For the first month, they did easy stretches, followed by 2 months of sun salutations (*sūryanamaskār*). Classes, which met five times a week, were typically 45 min in length, and were offered for a reasonable fee of Rs. 500, about US $10 per month). Chandra believed that one first needed to plant the seed for a yoga practice; once this had been accomplished, other poses could be taught based on the body type and needs of the student. This teacher did not adopt a "one size fits all" approach and the *āsana* practice that one learned was not rigidly sequenced (as compared, for example, to Ashtanga Yoga). Beyond teaching postures, Chandra prescribed yogic diets based on timely eating, eating specific raw and cooked foods based on season, and avoidance of junk food and cold drinks which permeate the Indian landscape.

One of his students, a 35-year-old Indian school teacher and wife of a software engineer, had recently begun studying yoga. She was encouraged to do so by her husband who had participated in corporate yoga classes designed to reduce stress among employees at his worksite. Several of her colleagues were studying yoga, and her in-laws supported her interest in what they perceived to be a traditional Indian practice. She had read about the positive attributes of yoga, including weight loss and stress relief, in popular Indian women's magazines. "I feel like it's relaxing my mind. I notice I'm not as short tempered with my son as I used to be, so I think something is working." She was also interested in taking off the weight she had put on during her pregnancy.

A 45-year-old Indian woman who was taking Hatha Yoga classes elsewhere had initially been attracted to yoga because she experienced frequent headaches. She expressed concern over possible side effects she might have as a result of taking "heating" allopathic pills regularly to suppress her headaches.[23] A dedicated mother, she was under a lot of stress because her 16-year-old son was taking tutorials and facing his school examinations which would determine his college placement and ultimately his future. Taking yoga class was a culturally acceptable practice and was one of the only times of the day she could carve out for herself. Her yoga teacher had told her that "yoga had no side effects" and the near daily practice was already helping her to de-stress enough so she no longer needed to rely on pills.

[23] Classification of foods and medicines as hot, cold, and neutral is commonplace in South Asia. Allopathic medicine is widely believed to be heating the body resulting in conditions linked to overheat such as diarrhea, burning of the hands and feet, among other symptoms. For a discussion of indigenous beliefs about the hot and cold qualities of medicine, see Nichter (2001).

Another Mysore yoga teacher believed that within a few years yoga would be taught to all school children in Mysore. While I was unable to assess the veracity of his statement, it is clear that yoga has a growing presence in India today. On the national level, Swami Ramdev, a North Indian guru credited with reintroducing yoga to the middle classes of India, has a daily television program viewed by over 20 million people each morning, focusing primarily on the art of breathing. Wildly popular, his "yoga made easy" approach promises to yield health benefits with minimal effort.[24] His message is that yoga can clear blocked arteries, lower blood pressure, and provide a cure "for all illnesses" including diabetes, cancer, asthma, and kidney failure. "Diseases are nothing but imbalances of the body and yoga corrects those imbalances," he asserts. A portion of his daily program features ayurvedic practitioners discussing Ramdev's brand of natural foods and herbal medicines, specifically targeted at a wide array of conditions. In 2007, Swami Ramdev was listed among "India's Top 50 Power People."[25] His plan is to create a political party that will field candidates for each of the parliamentary seats in India stating that "we clean up our bodies, then we will clean up our democracy!"[26] Through popular leaders such as Swami Ramdev, yoga is being reintegrated and revitalized in contemporary Indian culture.

Conclusions: Unpacking the Social Life of Yoga

In this paper, the desires, expectations, and social imaginaries of global health tourists have been explored in relation to yoga practice in a small South Indian city. Numerous global flows circulate into and within India in the arena of health and wellness tourism and myriad factors shape these flows. These flows of ideas, people, products, and ideologies are not "... convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent," but marked by asymmetries, instability, and fluidity.[27] Through a close examination of the complex social life of yoga, I consider social imaginaries, confluences, tensions, and frictions.

I have categorized the stream of foreigners traveling to Mysore to study yoga into four broad categories ranging from the "yoga lites" to the "yoga professionals." This categorization has allowed me to unpack the practice of postural yoga in relation to a range of issues from the commodification and certification of yoga, to yoga as a personal journey of self-transformation involving the centrality of place

[24] See the *New York Times* (1 February 2005) article "New Delhi Journal; India's Harried Elite Now Turns, and Twists, to Yoga Lite," written by Hari Kumar.

[25] See S. Prasannarajan's ranking of "India's Top 50 Power People" in the magazine *India Today*, March 2009.

[26] See Lydia Pol Green's article in the *New York Times* (18 April 2010): "Indian Who Built Yoga Empire Works on Politics."

[27] Appadurai (1990, 5).

and a quest for authenticity. Those in the first category, the "yoga lites," journey to India to participate in a yoga workshop with a non-Indian teacher for pleasure. Their yoga practice in India was often situated in a protected, isolated, and stress-free environment where the style of teaching was similar to what they experienced at home. Among those categorized as "yoga travelers," the imaginary of India was formed and re-formed through experiences garnered on the road outside of the context of yoga. Stopping in Mysore for a prolonged period surrounded by other travelers, the expectation was to find a peaceful retreat from the challenge of Indian travel. Because their study of yoga was not their sole reason for visiting India, these travelers sometimes struggled to learn the practice in classes that provided no verbal instruction. The nature of the *guru-śiṣyā* relationship was unfamiliar to yoga travelers as was the idea of being given poses at a slow rate under the watchful gaze of a teacher. Self-transformation and search for authenticity appeared less important in their narratives than finding a convivial place which afforded immediate social connectivity. Yoga travelers were a fluid and heterogeneous collection of individuals, many of whom were seeking new directions in their life through travel and adventure. After some time in Mysore, several of these travelers transitioned to become more serious students of yoga extending their stay to allow for further study.

A third group of yoga students ("going to the source") were primarily involved with the search for an authentic yoga experience. While a detailed discussion of the broader concept of authenticity is beyond the scope of this paper, the notion of "internalized authenticity" has been defined by Regina Bendix as primarily an emotional and moral quest which "arises out of a profoundly human longing" and a desire to compensate for the lack of authenticity in everyday life. Bendix and others suggest that this search for recovery of a lost essence has taken on heightened significance in connection to the routinization and over-predictability of modern life.[28] Interviews with dedicated yoga students revealed that practice at the source was believed to enhance one's connection to their inner self, with yoga seen as a conduit between the outer and inner worlds. Regular practice in the *śālā* with time afterward for digesting the experience allowed the yoga to be internalized and more fully integrated into one's being. Such experiences were described as getting closer to one's "true self" and were seen as central to the creation and fulfillment of living an authentic and meaningful life. Of particular importance in the quest for authenticity was the embodiment of place associated with practice in the Mysore *śālā*. Within this almost sacred space, where the spirit of Pattabhi Jois lives on in photographs which surround the room, and where his daughter and grandson (the lineage holders) provide occasional bodily adjustments, one could experience heightened awareness of the subtleties of the inner body or experience a transformational shift. The *śālā* is a space where one can be completely absorbed and attentive to such shifts in bodily experiences. Embodying the sense of place fully was an important component of this self-transformation. Through the lens of

[28] Bendix (1997, 17).

sensorial anthropology, one could argue that to some extent, one's identity is environmentally constituted.[29] Strengthened by this community of practice, where serious students are informally bound together by shared passion and experience, one is able to transcend or step outside of one's usual identity into a new more "authentic" and spontaneous sense of self.

Having made numerous journeys to Mysore, the goal of many "yoga professionals" was to receive the required authorization to teach Ashtanga Yoga in their own country. In contrast to previous times when one received this credential in the form of a blessing from the guru, aspiring teachers today are informed on the official KPJAYI website that obtaining credentials remains at the discretion of the director. This shift in nomenclature from "Guruji" to "director" is notable as it formally marks a transition from a *guru-śiṣyā* teaching style to the formation of a corporate enterprise. It also speaks to the felt need of the family to protect the legacy and intellectual property rights of Ashtanga Yoga given the reality and unpredictability of transnational yoga flows.

Previous research on Ashtanga Yoga students has characterized them as being on a devotional "Jois pilgrimage."[30] A more nuanced analysis of the evolving flow of yoga students to Mysore reveals that while this characterization is appropriate for those who have "gone to the source" or are "yoga professionals," it does not aptly capture the motivations of those students who are "yoga lites" or "yoga travelers." The individuals within these latter groups do not appear to be on pilgrimage (which would entail purposeful travel in search of a spiritual experience) but rather are drawn to Mysore primarily for purposes of self-care, self-healing, or as a "time-out" from travel. The pilgrimage metaphor, albeit a modern one which includes the internet, cappuccinos, and spa treatments, is perhaps a more apt characterization for those who were more serious students. From their devotional pilgrimage to Mysore, they obtained cultural capital which would be recognized and admired upon their return home to their respective yoga studios.

As Appadurai articulates, flows are often marked by relations of disjuncture and friction, and such frictions were apparent in Mysore within and across groups. In the context of transnational yoga, the friction metaphor draws attention to the actual contact and asymmetry between people, and offers a way to appreciate the complexity of cultural interaction. In relation to Kriya Yoga, Kathinka Froystad has discussed the utility of the friction metaphor as it invites an analysis of concrete encounters as "an emergent and uncertain process" that emphasizes individual agency, action, and interpretation.[31] Some of the yoga students "going to the source" described such frictions as they talked about being disturbed by other students' inappropriate behavior, which included partying, drugs, and frequent hookups. They also expressed dismay at fellow students who demonstrated a lack of care for their bodies (i.e., inappropriate fasting), and lack of focus on their

[29] Brennan (2002).
[30] Burger (2006).
[31] Froystad (2009).

practice. Frictions and different cultural styles were also evident within the delineated categories. While some students who viewed themselves as "going to the source" were eager to embrace and talk about the spiritual components of the practice, others were reluctant to do so, focusing instead on the more secular aspects, namely proper bodily positioning. Similarly, while some students in this category showed deep reverence for the guru, other equally serious Asthanga Yoga students felt uncomfortable doing so themselves and were dismayed at seeing others bowing at the door or to photos of Jois. Another point of friction among more advanced students was a perception that the yoga *śālā* was thick with egos and competition, with some students posturing to be noticed by the teacher. A close examination inside these broad categories of students allows us to more fully appreciate the richness, heterogeneity, and complexities of the social life of yoga. The work of Ana Tsing highlights how cultures are continually co-produced in their interactions, particularly at the point of frictions where uncomfortable or unstable qualities of interconnections become pronounced.[32] Frictions of this type are evident in Mysore in interactions of Ashtanga Yoga students and Indian entrepreneurs as a result of the commodification and commercialization of traditional Indian therapies such as ayurvedic treatment and massage. This was particularly disquieting for those Westerners who were seeking authenticity in Mysore and were troubled by what they perceived to be inauthentic and unethical forms of treatment where they were encouraged to buy expensive treatments for putative symptoms.

There is an increasing flow of yoga students to Mysore, and a notable shift in their reasons for coming when compared to earlier years. In the 1960s and 1970s, when traveling and living in India was more difficult, those who came to study with Pattabhi Jois were devotees of the tradition who embraced the *guru-śiṣyā* relationship. Travel today is no longer the arduous journey it once was: one can leave from most European cities in the early morning and reach Mysore by midafternoon, with direct transportation from the Bangalore airport and accommodation prebooked on the internet. For some, the journey to Mysore is relatively seamless. More of today's younger students, I was told, are on a "me-oriented" spiritual quest, marked by a discourse of "nailing" poses and pushing through to practice higher series of *āsana* practice. This is distinct from the ethos of *bhakti* and surrender which characterized earlier yoga devotees. There are also more people traveling to study yoga as a means of healing from traumatic life experiences (drug addiction, marriage and love breakups, eating disorders, etc.) because they have heard and read in best sellers like *Eat Pray Love* that yoga might be able to fix them.[33] As one local Indian practitioner observed "Today's students are different than they were in

[32] Tsing (2004).

[33] Gilbert (2006), and the recent feature film of this book portraying a woman who travels to India to an ashram following divorce. Asha Persson (2010) also notes that many of the students she studied in Australia had been drawn to Satyananda Yoga after a crisis in their life world including depression, illness, injury, or addiction.

previous days. The young students, those who are in their 20s, their sincerity and patience to evolve is not there. . . Their efforts to grow are not as sincere." Notions of what constitutes a *guru-śiṣyā* relationship in the modern world of yoga remains to be studied more closely.

What attracts increasing numbers of people to Mysore is not just the practice of yoga but the activities that surround this yoga destination. A host of after-class activities are available for the yoga practitioner eager to learn more about Indian culture, including traditional and New Age healing services. A hybrid world is emerging characterized by innovative combinations of transcultural teachings such as reiki, and other practices which are advertised in popular meeting places (e.g., Tai Chi Yoga, ayurvedic-Swedish massage). Such evolving new age practices have been specifically developed for foreigners coming to Mysore. Indian entrepreneurs have emerged to cater to the myriad desires, needs and fantasies of international yoga students. Shopkeepers have flocked to sell everything Indian, and New Age healers and ayurvedic spas have sprung up to provide goods and services to foreigners with time on their hands and money in their pockets. Yoga has itself expanded as a market in a country where all business opportunities are explored aggressively. I was told that the growing number of yoga teachers in Mysore is not so much a reflection of a growing interest in yoga but rather a matter of economics. "There is big money to be made in the yoga business," one shop vendor told me. Yoga is currently one of India's best sellers.

Over the past decades, the popularity of yoga in Western countries has contributed to its revitalization in India. The Brahmin scholar who provided lectures to yoga students quoted Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's observation: "Although the sun rises in the East, it is only when we see it reflected in the West that we Indians take notice of it." He drew this analogy to point out that many Indians did not recognize the treasure they had in yoga until Westerners became interested in the practice. He did not believe, however, that the current interest of middle-class Indians in yoga reflected its use as a deep source of spirituality. "People practice now because it serves their needs, either to improve how they look or to help with physical body problems from sitting too long, working at a desk, or simply to get relief from being stressed." My research in Mysore in the Indian community revealed that yoga is not practiced so much for its spiritual value but rather as a culturally acceptable form of physical activity. This is particularly noteworthy as there are relatively few acceptable or available forms of exercise in cosmopolitan India, particularly for women.

Just as there are many flows in India of foreign yoga students, so there are divergent forms of yoga being practiced by Indians within the country (Alter 2004). Clearly the place of yoga in religious ashrams and in holy centers such as Rishikesh where one is totally immersed in the practice as a way of life has a different meaning than it does in cosmopolitan India. At present, yoga practices in cosmopolitan India can be characterized as hobby yoga; gym and slim yoga; corporate de-stress yoga; televised yoga with Swami Ramdev; spa yoga, etc. Increased interest in the reshaping of the body to fit a new beauty ideal has enhanced Indian women's desire to learn yoga, which is being promoted in yoga videos made by

Bollywood stars and in popular women's magazines as an effective weight loss strategy. While housewives in small cities like Mysore practice Hatha Yoga to lose weight and to relieve stress (from their children's examinations), in nearby cosmopolitan cities like Bangalore, affluent yuppies take hybrid yoga classes in gyms with such offerings as Power Yoga or Hot Yoga among the menu options. As one young woman explained, "Yes I'm taking yoga classes, but it's not the yoga that my grandfather did!" Among young urban elite Indian women, yoga has become a part of the modernity project and has itself been shaped to fit new conceptions of self. Notably, there were no Indian students (or NRIs) studying at KPJAYI during the time I was there, reinforcing the notion that the yoga that is valued by so many foreigners (i.e. the vigorous Ashtanga Yoga style), is not what is preferred by Indians.[34]

One might argue that the rising global popularity of yoga reflects the value placed on flexibility in a world characterized by flexible accumulation.[35] Clearly, the transnational yoga movement has shown great flexibility in adapting to changing ideas of self-improvement, cultural constructions of yoga, and market forces. As Geoffrey Samuel has argued, modern yoga is an important part of "contemporary Western bodily cultivation" and the process for both Indians and Westerners "is one of creative adaptation rather than of literal transmission."[36] To this end, he notes that "yoga... in the forms that we know it today in Asia and the West, is largely a product of modernity." Ethnographic studies which explore and document the social life of yoga and the contexts in which it is being taught and practiced have much to tell us about how the East and West influence each other's identity projects in planned and unplanned ways.

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[34] Saraswati Jois did teach a few Indian women in the afternoon but these classes were for Indians only. The cost of classes for the month at the *śālā* with foreign students may have been prohibitive for most Indians.

[35] Martin (1997).

[36] Samuel (2007, 78).

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Yoga as a Production Site of Social and Human Capital: Transcultural Flows from a Cultural Economic Perspective

Anne Koch

Abstract From a cultural economics perspective, transcultural flows in yoga are analyzed using field study data from German yoga institutions and an international Anglophone resort in Thailand. Yoga is seen as a production site of value creation. Through the internalization of the mental model of yoga, several forms of human capital are built up. An eminent external effect of regular yoga practice may be the production of public or social goods, such as a more attentive attitude towards the human and natural environment. On a macrolevel, the partial yoga markets are characterized by diversification dynamics and path dependency. Within the dimension of informal structures, like accumulated body capital, reflexive belief systems are established that also influence, for example, behavior at work or health prevention strategies. Here, materialist interests regularly interrelate with postmaterialist aims, such as increased autonomy. However, the community of practitioners is transient and with a low level of commitment, the experience of like-mindedness is important for the subjective quality of the courses offered.

Introduction

Recent mass mobility, cheap long-distance transportation, diasporas, new media, and global firms build up a constant background noise of worldwide information flowing in narratives, through experiences, and in everyday media consumption. How have these forms of communication and this environment changed today's globalized yoga? "Yoga" here refers to the practices and discourses which arose at the end of the nineteenth century out of the encounter between Western subcultures

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in Europe and North America on the one hand, and Indians conversant with transnational Anglophone debates on the other. The Western physical culture of that time with its gymnastics and proprioceptive therapies played an important role in this process, in addition to many other influential cross links with (oriental) dance, esotericism, and psychological schools, such as the early humanistic psychology of William James.[1]

The contemporary cultural study of religion frequently conceives of its objects in terms of discourse theory, in the tradition of Michel Foucault, as a conglomeration of practices, declarations, and power positions. From this perspective, yoga, as "spiritualized relaxation"[2] at the interface between esotericism and physical training, is also a part of the European history of religion.[3] This European history of religion goes beyond the geographical confines of Europe and takes into account transcontinental exchange, as well as inner-European religious pluralism and interferences between functionally distinct sub-areas of society, such as science and religion, or everyday life and religion. With this interest in interferences, the concept of a European history of religion prepares the way for the concept of transcultural flows by seeking such flows not only transnationally but also within the dynamics of modern societies. These interferences between social sub-areas are constitutive for the formative phase of the modern yoga discourse. Religious convictions from the esotericism at the end of nineteenth century found their way into the yoga discourse and the self-image of yoga actors: The equality of all religious systems, the centrality of intuition and experience, and the goal of individual self-realization. The dynamic of the yoga discourse today can only be explained through its embeddedness in other discourses or, in religio-economic terms, partial markets.

This article examines the push-and-pull factors affecting flows in the yoga discourse at the beginning twenty-first century. The material is taken from two field studies carried out in several yoga studios in Munich, Germany, and in an international Anglophone yoga resort on the island of Koh Samui in Thailand. Cultural transfer theory has long been a common tool for tracing the history of modern postural yoga. Transfer in this case is understood as the selective recontextualization of practices in the target culture.[4] Conceptualizing contemporary yoga using the notion of transcultural flows may offer a means of reconstructing

[1] De Michelis (2004), Singleton (2005, 2010).

[2] Singleton (2010, 289), who borrows Vishnudevananda's "spiritual relaxation."

[3] A fundamental concept introduced in 1993 by Burkhard Gladigow, a scholar of religion. He assimilated the reconstruction of religious history to the paradigm of cultural history, as developed by historians in the early modern period. Gladigow (1995) recently described in Kippenberg et al. (2009).

[4] Schnäbele (2009, 53–56).

back-and-forth exchange dynamics. Cultural transfer theory, network theory, and globalization and migration theories are undergoing their third or fourth round of elaboration to keep pace with the flows. In the study of religion, the push-and-pull factors of religious flows have been discussed in connection with general "secularization phenomena." Economic and social developments have been put forward as factors influencing this alleged secularization: changed production conditions, the altered status of gainful employment, consumer orientation, detraditionalization, and bureaucratization were, and still are, parameters that are seen as determining the importance of spirituality, and the demand for "salvation goods" (Weber).

Going beyond the variants of the secularization narrative, the methodological approach followed in this article will, with the aid of religio-economic concepts, enable us to show flows between the sub-areas on the basis of the available data. Unlike ideological narratives of increasing or decreasing religiosity action formations in the area of yoga will be studied as places of production. In order to follow up this production and the way it is affected by push-and-pull factors, an approach has been chosen that is inspired by NIE (New Institutional Economics). Economics of religion is a very recent specialization within the study of religion, which in the past has almost exclusively followed the neoclassical rational choice paradigm.[5] On the application of NIE to religion, as attempted here, there exists only one monograph, written by an economist.[6] This work is problematic for two reasons: It is based on an essentialist understanding of religion, and it uses the example of the institutionalized religion of German Christian churches. This means that any economics of religion study with a discursive understanding of religion, having as its object religion that is not organized as a church, is entering new and uncharted territory. The great advantage of the economics of religion approach is that it can profit from an empirically based economic action theory. Moreover, this approach is relevant in the case of flows, since in economic theories, besides the recently discovered interest in action as transaction, the idea of exchange in markets has been a central concept for a long time. This is also a reason why we can expect that economic theories may help to shed light on transcultural exchange, for instance regarding what is exchanged, what goods flows exist, what circulates in the opposite direction to the goods, what are production factors, or what determines demand.

We will first outline some basic features of the cultural economic approach, which shapes the religio-economic approach followed here, and then present some material from our two field studies. We will focus on the production site, on shared mental models, path dependence, and on the forms of human capital that are created. In the concluding section, the yield obtained from the cultural economic approach will be discussed from the perspective of theories of modernity.

[5] For an overview of recent research, see Koch (2010, 2011).

[6] Brinitzer (2003).

The Cultural Economic Approach

By cultural economics I understand a transdisciplinary field of research in which culture is studied using economic models.[7] Among these models, the religio-economic position I intend to adopt here is that of New Institutional Economics (NIE), which developed out of the older rational-choice paradigm of neoclassical economics. Institutions theory investigates how institutional structures, regional und cultural, influence behavior and what costs are incurred by the transactions.[8] The term "institution" covers a continuum of regulations, from internalized rules for good manners, to what is customary, to organizations having a particular legal form. In most institutions there is an overlap in these levels of knowledge regulation about how to proceed. The introduction of transaction costs, essentially through the economist Oliver Williamson, opposes notions of a transparent market with omniscient, non-opportunistic actors, and points to the fact that procuring information and controlling employees, for instance, are not cost neutral. Applied to yoga, we could say: The institution of physical exercise requires regular training, and the produced good is temporary: it is created during practice and ends together with it. Making the good durable and repeatable is thus an important requirement in respect of the transaction. This is achieved by a large number of low-threshold offers by yoga teachers in decentralized studios, and empowerment of the individual to continue practicing outside the teacher-pupil structures through the learning of a method, entailing habitualization. The yoga practice becomes part of every day life through the series of yoga postures on a material level and through an aestheticization of a way of life.

It makes a difference whether yoga is offered in a democratic market economy or a social market economy, in a socialist or an oligarchic context, and how high the cost of living and the wage level is in the country. A Philippine yoga teacher observes that in Manila young professionals practice at Bikram Yoga studios, whereas Ashtanga Yoga is mainly practiced by married women.[9] How can this be explained, or why is Hot Yoga very popular in Japan right now? Is it the demand for high performance in a post-Fordist society? Is the hot steam attractive to a hot-bath culture? Is the collective drill of the Hot Yoga teachers familiar to Japanese pupils? Or is this a global trend towards kinds of Power Yoga that started in California and have by now reached Japan?

For some people, the diffusion of yoga in industrial countries is related to forms of labor. In the first modern age– the second half of nineteenth century–the

[7] Robertson (1992). From the perspective of economics of anthropology, see for instance Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) and Gudeman (2001); from the perspective of economics of sociology, see Bourdieu's general understanding of sociology as economics of practices (1992, 1997), and on new sociological economics, see Swedberg (2007).

[8] For a general introduction see for instance Richter and Furubotn (2005). Other strands of the theory relate to agency (principle-agent relation) and property rights.

[9] Interview with J. C., 12 April 2010 at Yoga Thailand.

historical relaxation therapies movement (harmonialism) especially in the US explicitly conceived of yoga as a response to the perceived acceleration of the world, a world in which "nervous illnesses" were on the increase, in order to make labor more efficient. Singleton speaks of the "ideological dyad of harmonialism and labor."[10] In the second modern age–the second half of the twentieth century–therapeutic cultures of self-help and self-improvement that had emerged from psychology and management consulting at the beginning of the 1920s became increasingly popular.[11] Towards this background yoga was now perceived of as a technology of the self and care of the self, as defined by Foucault. It was debated whether this practice supports post-Fordist working conditions (flexibility, mobility, broad job descriptions, involvement of the whole person), or whether it may also lead to a distancing from these demands and even to an exit from gainful employment in late capitalism.[12] In other words, individual labor conditions and general economic conditions were recognized as important factors in the shaping of discourses on general (religious) forms of life. The religio-economic approach is a specialized approach that includes these economic factors in any interpretation of religion.

In order to profile a religio-economic approach within cultural economics, Max Weber's much misunderstood concept of salvation good (*Heilsgut*) must be clarified. For Weber, anything that leads to the goal of salvation is a salvation good. But such purposive relations exist for most activities, so that there is no additional descriptive value in introducing recreation as a holiday good or enjoyment as a theatre good, etc.[13] Rather, used in this way, the term salvation good is a symbolic-contextual ascription. From the point of view of economic goods doctrines, however, the salvation good is not a "good." These theories either start from subjective preferences and the relative value of certain goods leading to them (in the rational choice tradition), or they start from the labor needed for the production of a good. What Weber means by the term is an overall end goal for a whole sphere of action, in this case a life goal which for its realization requires a particular kind of behavior, in other words a whole range of actions (the *habitus* in Pierre Bourdieu's reception of Max Weber).[14]

[10] Singleton (2010, 301).

[11] Illouz (2007).

[12] Altglas (2008) and Singleton (2005): Yoga is popular in the educated middle class as a means of coping with modern life. See also Schnäbele's contribution in this volume and Schnäbele (2009): Yoga as a means of coping or as an optional exit from capitalism.

[13] The delayed obtaining of salvation in the next world as the "salvation good" in many religious doctrines is no reason for postulating a special kind of good, since there is such a delay in many areas, for instance bringing up children, investing in further education, or providing for one's old age.

[14] Merz-Benz (2008). For this "number of actions" aiming at salvation several life styles are possible: The mystical, the ascetic, the experiential etc.

A further fruitful concept was that of human capital.[15] In recent discussions on neo-capital theories, human capital includes several types of capital building, such as cultural and social capital.[16] Bourdieu understands social capital as the reliability of social networks. It is therefore a resource for attaining goals, and depends on how many friends one can stir into action to support oneself, and on how influential they are. James S. Coleman's understanding of social capital is more formal: It is not personalized, but established through the relationships as such.[17] These enable, impede, or facilitate the attaining of goals within a society. So it need not be friends but general societal norms of relationships and behavior that hinder or help one's actions. Robert D. Putnam goes a step further in anchoring the social capital in a "community" or society beyond personal or structural relations. Social capital and the effectiveness of a society in dealing with its tasks depend on its members' willingness to cooperate and this is deeply rooted in trust. The discussion of "religious," "sacred," or "spiritual" capital involves the same problems as the concept of salvation goods.[18] As we saw above, it does not make sense to claim a "type" of religious capital beside the "token" of manifold practices in religious contexts.

The Creation of Value in the Partial Market of Munich Yoga

The *Yoga Guide* for Munich, first published in 2010, lists 80 yoga providers.[19] The yoga styles found in the city, which has 1.3 million inhabitants, are extremely diverse. For most studios, the *Yoga Guide* explains the combination of styles that is practiced there, and offers short introductions to Anusara Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Bikram Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Hormone Yoga, Integral Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Jivamukti Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Luna Yoga, Prana Vinyasa Flow Yoga, Power Yoga, Sivananda Yoga, Tao Yin Yoga, Tri Yoga, Viniyoga. Most studios charge between 12 and 20 euros for a yoga class lasting one and a half hours. Tickets are normally sold in blocks of ten or as annual tickets. Websites are the usual form of communication for presenting the studio's yoga lineage, the teachers' qualifications, the regular program, and special offers. Some teachers give classes at more than one studio, so that there are plenty of institutional cross links at this level.

[15] See Becker (1976), who was one of the first economists to apply it in a neoclassical framework to families as households.

[16] Bourdieu (1992), see also Esser (2000) and Putnam (1993).

[17] Coleman (1988).

[18] Iannaccone (1995), Urban (2003), and Verter (2003) (for an overview see Elwert 2007). The Metanexus Foundation's spiritual capital project is very reminiscent of the phenomenological endeavor to describe religion as *sui generis*.

[19] The Yoga Guide is a free brochure assembled by Evi Eckstein and Annet Münzinger and distributed by Munich yoga studios.. It can be assumed that a number of semi-private yoga classes provided by yoga teachers independently from the institutionalized studios can be added to the list.

In 2007 and 2009/2010, my students and I carried out field studies in about a dozen Munich yoga studios representing different traditions and styles.[20] The guided interview was designed in light of Laurence Iannaccone's religio-economic theory construction in the rational choice tradition, and supplemented by NIE.[21] It produced data with which forecasts arising from these two approaches can be tested, and the explanatory value of the two can be compared. Questions were asked relating to the following clusters: (1) initial investment and search costs, (2) diversification, (3) motives of practitioners, (4) internalization of the mental model, (5) human capital building, (6) maximizing strategies, (7) competition and cooperation, (8) the production of a public good.[22] Without presenting all the results here, we may select a few which characterize a local yoga market and its special production from the perspective of cultural economics, and which show the exchange processes between studios, yoga traditions and life spheres, in line with the theme of this volume.

The high degree of social capital building on the demand side, i.e. the construction of a network of supporters, is striking.[23] The data from the Munich field show that the majority of people have "good friends" who also practice yoga. The number seems to rise significantly with the time of practicing. In the questionnaire, we first asked for the names of the person's five best friends, and then how many of them practice yoga (Fig. 1). These friends meet outside the studio, organize joint yoga workshops, and help each other, for instance with removals. This factor must be seen as an "external effect"[24] of yoga practice with regard to the yoga doctrine that does not propagate socializing.

[20] By means of about forty guided interviews and around twenty questionnaires, data were collected from the following Munich providers: A private yoga teacher, Yogavision (yoga and yoga therapy following the Desikachar school), Yoga-Atelier, Münchner Yogazentrum, Luna Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Jivamukti, Wojo, Hier und Jetzt, Elixia Fitnessstudio, Air Yoga, Bikram Yoga.

[21] Iannaccone (1998).

[22] The guided interview was based on the principles of grounded theory and contained the following initial question per cluster: (1) How did you start practicing yoga? (2) What do you do apart from yoga? (3) Why do you practice yoga? (4) How has practicing yoga affected your daily life? (5). Do any of your relatives or friends practice yoga? (6) What are your future yoga plans? (7) Which yoga studio would you not go to? (8) Who, in your opinion, should practice yoga? Yoga teachers and studio managers were asked additional questions concerning the history of their institution and their interaction with other partial market participants, for instance with regard to pricing or joint marketing.

[23] Bourdieu (1992) and Iannaccone (1995).

[24] External effect means unintended side effects, e.g. when the social utility is higher than the individual utility.

Fig. 1 Number of friends practicing yoga for 31 Munich yoga practitioners from nine yoga studios in Munich (2007–2009)

Diversification and Path Dependency in Partial Market Dynamics

Yoga consumption is diversified in manifold ways, for instance through sports, mountain climbing, fasting, Feldenkrais, or Qi Gong. This diversification is connected with individual motives, in other words whether yoga is seen as a sport or as a spiritual practice, and also on the local institutional setting. Yoga is embedded in various other partial markets, depending on what else is available in the way of sport and recreation or spiritual events. Our study showed that those people for whom yoga is bound up (over time) with spiritual motives, also have a portfolio of other spiritual activities. The same applies to the providers. Depending on how the goal (the salvation good, as some would say) is characterized in a yoga tradition or local studio, the studio interacts with other partial markets. Yoga therapy in the tradition of Desikachar, for instance, competes, overlaps, or cooperates with therapeutic partial markets (body therapy, physiotherapy), whereas Hot Yoga competes with gyms.

Independently of the diversification of demand for yoga as a healing or a sporting activity, it can also be observed that there are two levels within the yoga institutions. On the formal level of their self-representation in brochures or on the internet, yoga institutions are fairly indistinguishable. On the individual level, mechanisms of heterogenization have a strong influence. On this latter informal level, friendly yoga teachers are crucial to the decision to join a class and come back on a regular basis. This means that while on the formal level certain yoga myths are relevant, on the informal level these are of no interest or only marginal interest for rates of participation. For example, the allusions to India or specific aesthetics of flowers, colors, and symbols, which appear on the homepages of most of the studios, are often lacking in the everyday practice of the studios, or are dependent on the taste and choice of the teachers. Some practitioners want the "magic" of incense, for example, while others don't.[25]

[25] De Michelis (2004, 187–189) roughly separates more postural and more meditative strands of modern psychosomatic yoga that still have to be distinguished from what she calls modern denominational yoga, like Transcendental Mediation or ISKCON.

But even with a broader trend of "Asian spirituality" in terms of aesthetics and lifestyle, or international networks of yoga schools, the regional yoga field is more dependent on the regional path of modernization. "Path dependency" means that the repetition of certain ways of proceeding becomes fixed as an organizational structure, which then often continues to exist even when it is no longer efficient and productive.[26] The economic concept of the path-dependent partial market can be developed with the aid of the cultural schema presented by Bruce Knauft to obtain a cultural economics concept capable of explaining cultural mechanisms of path dependency.[27] The anthropologist Knauft sketches a coordinational system of formal relations to grasp these local constellations of modernity. The coordinates are "culture" on one hand, and "political economy" (x) on the other, while proceeding from the pole of "tradition" to "modernity" (y)—modernity being understood as innovative, changing, technological, capitalistic, and having a high degree of political participation. We might supplement a third coordinate that opens up a range from poverty to wealth, or hope for wealth. The pole of modernity "can" often be characterized by a deepened gap between poor and rich and at the same time the accumulation of immense riches for some. This model might explain why one and the same yoga practice can be so differently positioned in a society: As a way of improving work performance, as wellness, as a women's emancipatory movement, or as an ascetic religious exercise.

Local modernization paths remain to some degree accidental. In 2010, for instance, only very few opportunities to practice Ashtanga Yoga can be found in Munich. One of the reasons for this could be the success of three big Jivamukti Yoga studios. Accidental does not mean inexplicable. The success of Jivamukti Yoga may be related to the chronology of the dissemination of yoga in Germany and the establishment of this tradition there by central agents.[28] In cultural economic terms, the market phase and market shares of traditions are crucial for success.[29] Every market phase of a partial market is characterized by specific challenges. The many contingent decisions taken by a studio give it a certain institutional structure and orientation. Embarking on this particular institutional path has consequences in respect to customer target groups, flexibility, and further investment costs. If Jivamukti Yoga is a market leader in the local Munich market, with products that are well developed and tested on the local level, it will be more risky and expensive for new investors to find a footing in this regional market.[30]

[26] Reasons for this rigidity are discussed for instance in Brinitzer (2003, 76–106).

[27] Knauft (2002).

[28] On contemporary yoga in Germany, see Fuchs (1990) and Schnäbele (2009, 77–87). There is to date no historical account of the Munich yoga scene.

[29] Worldwide chronology, De Michelis (2004, 190–194), Schnäbele (2009, 48–77), and Singleton (2010).

[30] One could go into details and compare the products of the different studios. Jivamukti, for instance, offers an "integrated product" consisting of posture practice, singing, meditation, and mantras in every class, while some studios only open the class with a chant and some completely renounce neo-Hindu elements.

The initial investment of Jivamukti Yoga—to stay with this example, without any data on investment sums—will pay off today, whereas a new entrepreneur will have to invest more in marketing, reputation, teachers, networking, and equipment to enter the market at this phase of development.

Internalization of the Mental Model and the Production of Public or Social Goods

Sport or pursuing a kind of physiotherapy are common initial motives for practicing yoga. With time, people's motives change and include positive consequences in other spheres of life, such as work-life balance or performance at work. At least two people who attend a Friday evening class report that they can leave the week's workload behind them and enjoy a "free mind" and a "good start to the weekend."[31] For them yoga is like a weekly rite of passage of cleansing. From the practice they can "take relaxation and meditation with them to their free-time."[32]

Another aspect of physical training according to the informants is the balancing of body and soul. They say that a psychological balance is established and maintained through regular yoga practice. This happens in an atmosphere where there is no pressure to perform well. Instead, the creative way a female yoga teacher treats her body is admired. Creativity is thus more important than high performance. A repetitive, but not stressed, feature is the need for frequent practice. This helps the person to feel improvement and makes practice less strenuous and painful.[33] Informants report that they are "more focused in general," that they "feel more energy, and are more relaxed and happier in general."[34] Yoga is said to be a "release from everyday stress."[35] The ritualization of everyday life has already been mentioned in connection with the Friday evening class. In a similar way, some people profit from morning practice. They call it "greeting the day" or a "very different start to the day."[36] A change in mental condition is also very frequently reported. The new power acquired through yoga is emphasized. The gaining of calmness is commented on by means of a critical diagnosis of modern life: Calmness is seen as neglected in our culture.[37] Another practitioner reports that she observes other people with more interest and in more detail.[38] She notices the bad posture of

[31] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 30 March 2009, age 33.

[32] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 6 March 2009, age 32; interview at Jyotir Yoga, 30 March 2009, age 33.

[33] Interview at Anett Yoga, 17 January 2008, age 30.

[34] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 30 March 2009, age 33.

[35] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 6 March 2009, age 32.

[36] Interview at Anett Yoga, 17 January 2008, age 30.

[37] Interview at Anett Yoga, 17 January 2008, age 30.

[38] Interview at Anett Yoga, 19 January 2008, age 58.

most people she meets in the street. She regrets how few people have blinking eyes and mentions her intensified perception of nature. Others describe their new perspective and mode of thinking in everyday life.[39] They feel somehow enriched, intensified, and that they are growing personally or profiting from yoga practice. The experience that the practice of yoga is important for and connected with one's own way of life is a "turning point." All this indicates internalization of the mental model of yoga and the production of a so-called social or public good. The goods produced in yoga belong to several different categories.

On one hand, the goods produced during practice and in the teacher-pupil relationship are extraordinary experiences, or "experience goods." Their benefit can be experienced in the consuming of them: The practice of yoga improves a person's sense of wellbeing. This means that the goods do not have to be described as uncertain or risky, as is regularly done in the case of salvation goods.[40] From the description of salvation goods as uncertain, it is concluded that trust is necessary in the sphere of religion.[41] But, as we have seen above, trust is less important in yoga practice then it is in buying a second-hand car. On the other hand, the goods produced in yoga are to a certain extent public goods. A public good is accessible by a collective. No one is excluded from its consumption and the good cannot give rise to rivalry. Examples of public goods are peace or a clean environment. It is true that there is exclusivity in the production of yoga, since money is normally charged for courses, although it is possible to teach oneself yoga from YouTube videos or books. But the whole of society benefits from healthy yoga practitioners who have a caring attitude towards their environment and other people. However, this is not a generalizable interpretation, but one that is derived from individual comments. The public dimension shared here is the attention on the human and natural environment.

Transcultural Flow Through Embodied Practices: A Form of Human Capital Building

When we consider transcultural flows we have to be aware of informal regimes in which rules sprawl via informal structures to other subsystems. A predominant means of sprawling is altered body perception. We have already discussed social capital in the context of yoga, and will complement human capital by taking into account its embodiment, so that we may talk of "body capital" as a new and supplementary type of human capital. Body capital is different from social capital

[39] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 9 March 2009, age 31.

[40] For instance Brinitzer (2003, 161), who considers the uncertainty of existence in another world and of God to be the distinctive feature of religious goods, thus merely repeating the sacred-profane distinction.

[41] Seele (2009).

insofar as it helps one to stay with oneself, to be stable in oneself, and to gain independence from others by being aware of oneself. Body control, which is identical to cognitive and emotional control in yoga, is a strong tool for mastering life's challenges. To create bodily awareness is central in yoga.

To characterize bodily perception, the concepts of a postural model and of somatic modes of attention from Thomas Csordas' phenomenology of the body are helpful.[42] He employs these concepts to explain the efficacy of healing. Therapeutic processes of healing can alter the somatic mode of attention insofar that they can direct vigilance toward one's own body. This can also contain an active mode of response, like praying for instance when a nerve hurts again. Csordas explains: "What is ostensibly a reminder to the deity that he has granted a healing is pragmatically a self-reminder to monitor one's physical state."[43] We have already seen that the main features of relaxation in modern yoga were invented in connection with Western relaxation therapies.[44] According to my field data, practicing yoga also changes a person's perception of time (stress, acceleration, pace) and of the environment (nature, detailed perception, attractiveness of people, their inner glowing, etc.). Furthermore, some of the body techniques are used as a strategy for self-distancing in various contexts outside of yoga. Before an exam yoga helps one to calm down, before a hard working day it gives increased fitness or greater concentration at work. The benefit of calmness is undoubtedly the most frequently mentioned benefit of yoga. Several informants talk of their altered body perception in general. Some say that they take more care of their body. Most of the practitioners started yoga because of back problems. For one, it was a memorable moment when she felt an improvement after her first class.[45] Others talk of fitness, of feeling refreshed and more alert afterwards. One practitioner, a woman over 50, described her body as stiff. Practicing yoga gives her more flexibility and mobility. She talks of what she calls an addiction to yoga, and the astonishing experience it gives her of feeling alive: "The body lives."[46] This altered body perception and mode of attention deeply influence everyday life. Sociologists describe this as the normalizing effects of gainful employment. They are infiltrated by yoga body practices. This self-experience gives rise to a subjectivity that withdraws from post-Fordist demands and causes social change.[47] Thus we can say that these informal structures of the prediscursive body experience establish reflexive belief systems that have system-overlapping consequences. They not only have spiritual effects, but also influence, for example, behavior at work or health prevention strategies.

[42] Csordas (1993, 1994, 67–70).

[43] Csordas (1994, 69).

[44] Progressive muscle relaxation, working with images in autogenic training, moving-breath correlation for calming down, etc., Singleton (2005).

[45] Interview at Jyotir Yoga, 17 March 2009, age 27.

[46] Interview at Anett Yoga, 19 January 2008, age 58. See also Schnäbele (2009, 191–194), whose data also bear witness to this specific experience.

[47] Schnäbele (2009, 249).

An International Yoga Resort: A Pivotal Production Site

My second period of fieldwork took place at Yoga Thailand on the Thai island of Samui in 2009, 2010 and 2012. This remote beach resort on the south side of the island gives insight into an internationalized yoga scene in the Ashtanga Yoga tradition. The founder of Yoga Thailand is Paul Dallaghan who was born in Ireland and is one of the rare non-Indian certified teachers of Sri K. Patthabi Jois (1915–2009), the disciple and successor of Krishnamacharya (1888–1989), both of whom were based in Mysore, India. At the resort in Thailand, people from Europe, Southeast Asia, English-speaking countries including Australia and New Zealand, and some South American countries, take part in residential teacher-training courses, retreats, or wellness programs. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon dominance at Mysore,[48] the clientele at Yoga Thailand is very mixed, making it a typical laboratory of transcultural encounter. Dallaghan is an example of cultural translocation: Born in Ireland, he travelled through France, Germany, and Israel, and settled for a few years in New York, then went to India, and now lives in Thailand. He teaches around the globe. Together with his wife, he founded Yoga Thailand in 2004. After his initial Sivananda Yoga practice in the mid-1990s, he joined Sharon Gannon's Jivamukti Yoga Center in the East Side of Manhattan, New York, around 1998. There he met the Indian Ashtanga Yoga master Jois in 2000. Soon after, he traveled several times to Mysore in India. He practiced Ashtanga Yoga regularly from 2001 to 2004 at the K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute and obtained the teaching certificate in 2007. Dallaghan calls his specific approach, which is taught at the resort, "centered yoga". This school also belongs to the lineage of Sri O. P. Tiwari who is repudiated for his pranayama teaching from the Kaivalyadham Institute, a yogic hospital and college at Lonavla near Pune, India, one of the earliest modern yoga institutions, founded in 1921.

Koh Samui is a popular tourist island with several harbors and an airport located only 1 h by air from Bangkok. Besides Yoga Thailand there are other yoga centers on the island and yoga is offered in many hotels. Retreats are offered during holiday seasons such as Christmas and Easter, and residential courses lasting for periods from a few days to several weeks are available all the year round. Special teacher training is also held regularly. The yoga courses are complemented by special offers such as wellness retreats with detoxication. One week with lessons, single room, and full board costs between 850 and 1,090 euros, depending on the course. Since there are both guided classes and Mysore classes, all levels from beginners to advanced are catered for.[49] Additionally yogic knowledge is actualized and transmitted through the medium of daily lectures. These teachings translate the concepts of yoga philosophy and apply them to today's world of practitioners.

[48] Burger (2006, 93), footnote 36.

[49] In so-called Mysore classes every student practices in his own pace the series of Ashtanga as far as he is capable of performing them. The teacher supervises this by correcting some postures and breathing.

Dallaghan can be considered a typical actor and producer in international yoga. I heard many of his sayings from other international yoga teachers who took courses at Yoga Thailand. In Dallaghan's autobiographic narrative, as reconstructed from his website and from our interview, he does not see himself as wandering between different cultures. He employs the typical metaphor of the inner path and calling that he followed.[50] This is a frequently observed inwardness and focus on self-transformation that is typical of modern spirituality, not only of yoga adepts.[51] The focus that gives identity and stability is on the continuity of the practice or path. In the typical yoga discourse it is also a path with moments of understanding and moments of blindness. Despite the fact that Dallaghan practiced meditation or Tai Chi in the past, he "didn't understand" at that time. At the age of 16, Dallaghan spent some time alone on a farm in France. He says that this was a "yogic experience" and that "the change started then but the practice came 8 years later," in New York in 1995, when he physically came into contact with yoga for the first time at the age of 24. The change is characterized by him as a shift from one self to another self. It means changing one's attitude from the self-centeredness of "me Paul" who is learning something from someone, to a fluid self that figuratively "bows" down in humility and thinks of itself as knowing nothing and making no progress. The altered self then can be a self that "listens and exactly applies" what is learned in order to become a "real student." The virtues required are receptiveness and openness towards the teacher and strictly following his orders. In the interview I gained the impression that the shift basically evolves through developing a relationship with the teachers on a personal level.

The founding of the resort is understood as a "vehicle to allow people to step into it [yoga]," as he himself "started off ignorant." Dallaghan is deeply convinced that anyone who is really interested will find a place to practice. As a result of this attitude, he speaks disparagingly of yoga networks, which "talk about yoga on a commercial level." Dallaghan clearly expresses his concept of the resort as compromising "halfway." His "true desire" is to teach the very interested in a "very simple, private, hidden" place with a special routine, a desire he may realize in the future. But "that's not ready yet." He founded Yoga Thailand because, in his opinion, no such place existed with such food, cleanliness, and certain principles such as no alcohol, no smoking, no meat, and funky programs. He interprets his entrepreneurship as yoga practice according to the *Bhagavadgīta* citation: "Yoga is skill in action . . . how you take care of what you do is part of yoga." If the business does not succeed, he won't mind and will feel free to do something else. His business concept, halfway between a five-star hotel and an ascetic cave in the woods, is also reflected in the pricing policy. Westerners would not value a yoga course that is offered for free or for a donation. And a resort located in a secluded

[50] This and the following quotations: Interview with Paul Dallaghan, 8 April 2010 at Yoga Thailand.

[51] See for example De Michelis (2004, 184, 186), Gebhardt et al. (2005, 243–244), and Schnäbele (2009, 239–248).

place in the countryside would not be so popular or suited to the idea of offering a yoga place with fair prices for both advanced practitioners and for beginners who just want "to check out." Yoga Thailand produces value through "good facilities, good teaching, good prices," and "integrity" as expressed, for instance, in the above-mentioned principles. It's neither free, nor can you pay by working for the teacher, as in ancient yoga teaching systems. There is a price because "there has to be a level of respect in trade," but it is meant to be fair. From the perspective of cultural economics, respect is translated into currency. In sum, Yoga Thailand offers an innovative yoga product in a holiday-beach context with supplementary options like healing or cleansing. Thus, a yoga resort in Thailand produces not only a body practice, but also, because of the local atmosphere, the climate, and the seclusion, a holiday good and a healing good, with low transaction costs.

International Demand Side

Due to the high demand for strength and discipline in Ashtanga Yoga many of the people who go to Yoga Thailand have an athletic background. Some have taken part in competitive sports, at least at school, and some were even members of national leagues. But, as a former triathlete told me, the good thing about yoga is the lack of competition.[52] Supplementary to Schnäbele's results, where the emancipatory body experience is central, in the international resort setting we also find a joy in body mastery and progress. This would be in line with the capitalist logic of maximizing. However, it may be due to another factor, namely the system environment alone, which encourages body mastery to grow.

Regarding sociality, an international resort offers opportunities for a cooperative feeling, even if this is transient. Some or most of the yoga practitioners will never meet again, at least outside Facebook. The temporary association is enough to feel socially enhanced and still free to concentrate on oneself. The like-mindedness or common spirit of the resort community was stressed by most of my informants as the most important attraction, besides the yoga itself. This like-mindedness should not be exaggerated. It is not really proved by long discussions of similarities in everyday life, life experience, financial situation, or values. The sense of like-mindedness is as vague and open as modern notions of yoga philosophy in most of the yoga teachings. In Yoga Thailand for instance, it is established by rules of politeness, calmness or silence, and above all through the ritualized practice and its inherent value of "letting go." Like-mindedness can therefore be seen as a transnational space, in which face-to-face meetings are transient, rather than as a medium of transcultural exchange. For this reason, I cannot agree with Singleton who claims that in yoga "the individual moves away from community and towards

[52] Interview at Yoga Thailand, 6 April 2010.

self-management and market individualism."[53] Rather the form of community has changed and includes individualistic aspirations.

Self-empowerment through knowledge acquisition has been elaborated as a typical feature of modern religious subjectivity. The agent in this late capitalist spirituality is conceived of as "spiritual wanderer."[54] This agent forms his own opinion cognitively by reading and attending lectures, and through (embodied) experience of spiritual methods. He or she is an expert of his and her own experience and spiritual needs, and always "on the road," with a strongly pluralist outlook with regard to the importance of religions. On the other hand, this autonomy also results in personal developmental work: There is a path to be followed in order to become oneself. This attitude of the spiritual wanderer is seen for instance in the holiday behavior of more dedicated yoga practitioners. During their holidays they travel from retreat to retreat, seeking famous masters and gathering specialized knowledge on breath control, anatomy, or detoxification. India and Asia are global places, as well as the Miami Life Center in the United States, depending on where the masters have their base.[55] The masters are invited to yoga studios around the world and a regional as well as transnational scene emerges, consisting of people who attend these high-level workshops. These masters are also present at Yoga Thailand insofar as the dining area has wireless access to the web. Facebook pictures from other workshops or YouTube videos of these masters are often discussed or viewed in order to clarify a specific posture or breathing technique.

An often neglected site of yoga service production is the teacher-pupil relationship. Through the ritual of the yoga lesson, this service provides yoga convictions or the feeling of belonging with an incremental familiarity.[56] But important for healing is that the teaching service provides a space for psychodynamic processes which eventually lead to improved psychic wellbeing, or help to maintain psychic health.[57] Focusing on "one's own center," the dissolution of blockades and disturbing patterns are named by practitioners as a means of returning to health.[58] Dallaghan describes a gradually developing personal connection that opens the self of the pupil as a key service in this relationship. He even compares it to the deepening love relationship of a couple.[59] Besides instruction and the provision of an "oasis" of relaxation, the creation of personal relationships has to be mentioned as a part of this outstanding production site in yoga.

[53] Singleton (2005, 302).

[54] Gebhardt et al. (2005).

[55] In the Miami Life Center, for instance, the famous yogi Kino McGregor has her home base.

[56] On the ritual character of yoga classes see De Michelis (2004, 252–260) and Schnäbele (2009, 117–127).

[57] Appl (2010). Unlike psychoanalysis, negative emotions are not treated in the yoga relationship and transferences are not consciously worked with.

[58] Schnäbele (2009, 248–251).

[59] Interview with Paul Dallaghan 8 April 2010, Yoga Thailand.

Postmaterialistic Values or the Postmaterialism of Wealthy People

What motivates yoga practitioners who practice regularly and have already mastered a certain degree of yoga? Are they motivated by postmaterialistic values? Postmaterialistic values indicate a shift towards goals like the quality of life, self-realization, cultural activities, political participation, freedom, nature and animal protection, etc. Due to the economic crisis in the early 1970s on one hand, and the growing material security and progressive elimination of personal, physical, and societal risks in industrial societies on the other hand, Inglehart developed the theory that wealthy societies tend to postmaterialistic moral values.[60] These values are conceived as less absolutist and more relativist. From this perspective, relativism might make transcultural flows and their adaptation in new surroundings easier. Given the openness of societies for plural options, flows of goods, beliefs, and habits can be enriched with meaning, references, and directional changes. Is there such a liberating and postmaterialistic side to yoga? Leaving aside the question if the correlation of wealth and postmaterialism can be applied to all countries worldwide, we might ask how consumerist or postmaterialist yoga practitioners are.

Regarding income distribution among yoga practitioners in Munich, a majority of the clientele is not wealthy, even in an expensive city such as Munich, although it must be said these findings are related to a high proportion of very young practitioners (some of them are still students or pursuing some form of education) and women (who earn on the average less than men): Forty-eight percent of yoga practitioners earn less than 1,500 euros a month (see Fig. 2).

The situation is different at an international resort abroad. The initial investment for flights, holiday time, and retreat expenses is much higher than with the Munich example. I have no quantitative monetary data for the Thailand sample, but I have my own experience from participant observation. Most of the people are highly educated, fluent in English, have lived or been educated abroad, and work in specialized jobs, for instance as managers, lawyers, doctors, real estate agents, coaches, etc.[61] They buy supplementary wellness services and products in the resort. Shoe fashions are revealing as a statement of values and consumerism: No eco-minded sandals, but Diesel, Gucci, and other hip labels predominate. Even if these are fake brands their owners could afford to buy originals. Peace and love can be combined by this postmaterialistic materialistics with "juicy couture" (see Fig. 3).

Remarkably, five out of 30 yoga practitioners at Yoga Thailand were temporarily unemployed. They had left high positions due to exhaustion. The yoga retreat or

[60] Inglehart (1977). The materialist-postmaterialist dichotomy and the newer dyad of traditional-sacred versus secular-rational (Norris and Inglehart 2004) has been widely criticized (methodologically, for its linear historical thinking, and its reception of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, according to which postmaterialist needs arise only when material needs have been satisfied).

[61] I did not observe a majority of people coming from helping professions; see Strauss (2005, 83).

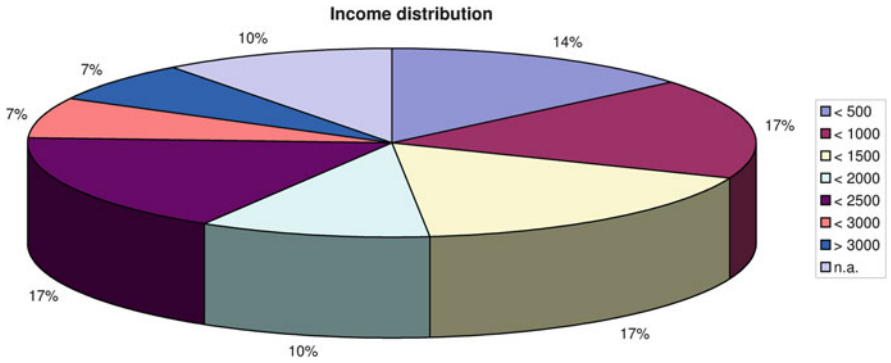

Fig. 2 Income distribution of 31 Munich yoga practitioners from nine yoga studios in Munich (2007–2009)

Fig. 3 "Peace, Love & Juicy Couture" on high heels does not necessarily imply postmaterialistic values (Photo: Yoga Thailand, March 2010, A. K.)

residential stay is intended to help them regain their strength before reentering high and demanding positions, or realizing their own business ideas in order to have more autonomy and creative time. Yoga is not an exit from capitalistic and post-Fordist working conditions. It is a product used by this group of people to enable them to compete again in the commercial world, as Strauss has described in her study on today's yoga travelers to Rishikesh in India.[62] According to Strauss, yoga balances the demands of risk societies for a societal subgroup (that has the financial means to practice yoga, as Schnäbele adds).[63] This fits Dallaghan's observation that the flow of Western practitioners to India has been encouraged by the change in global communication. In 2002 it was difficult to get online with a laptop in Mysore. Only 4 years later, in 2006, access to the Internet was possible anywhere in Mysore. Dallaghan stresses the ambivalence of this intensified and facilitated global communication and travel: "That change seems to allow the lifestyle to get in the yoga, right, allows it to fit. That does not necessarily mean that more [real, A.K.] yoga is done." But even if he criticizes the trend towards facilitating yoga, which is consumed like a holiday or after-work recreation, this is a necessary condition for creating demand among a global elite, enabling them to combine it with demanding jobs. If we think again of the coordinational system of Knauft, this use of yoga practice is not so much a way of just managing a work-life balance, but a marker of post-materialist capitalism, which tends towards the pole of modernity by following the goals of self realization in the job, and the self determination of work time, free time, and sabbaticals.

Conclusion

In transcultural studies several options of possible channels for transcultural flows are discussed: ideas, goods, human capital, institutions, and lifestyles. For Stanley Tambiah, it is mainly people, financial capital, and information that coalesce in transnational movements.[64] People and social networks, for sure, play a momentous role in spreading yoga geographically, for instance when Karma Yoga practitioners stratify yoga by going to orphanages, clinics, or schools to do social work for better karma. Life cycle rituals may also be crucial for transcultural flows, for example when young Israelis travel around the world after military service, before going to university, and end up in an Indian ashram practicing yoga. An Israeli informant explained to me how this habit accounts for the high number of Ashtanga Yoga institutes in Tel Aviv. Strauss sees a pull factor in cultural patterns.[65] Using Shmuel Eisenstadt's and Immanuel Wallerstein's concepts of periphery and center, she

[62] Strauss (2005, 58).
[63] Schnäbele (2009, 114).
[64] Tambiah (2002, 163).
[65] Strauss (2005, 51).

describes the early late nineteenth century flow of yoga from the periphery of the colonized subcontinent of India to the core of economic and political power in Europe as an exceptional countercurrent of flows in that epoch due to the idealization of Eastern wisdom in European romanticism, and Asia's view of the Western world as materialist. To explain transcultural flows, we should take into account these culturally bound expectations that materialize in cultural patterns. It was also Western talk of secularization and of living in a crisis that created a need for spirituality.[66] A discourse on technological biomedicine and on economically booming and accelerating cultures creates a pull factor for holistic medicine and a need for self-enhancement. "Being in a crisis" is easily transposed to more general figurations of an ill epoch or ill society. What was a figuration at the beginning becomes a "medicalized society" over time by a process of repetition and adaptation.

In addition to these concepts from cultural studies, this article has considered cultural economic modalities of producing, spreading, and negotiating as important factors for flows. Burger counts as a benefit of the cultural economic approach:

> . . .the differentiation of yoga's international and local markets: yoga as an export market—teachers travelling to take yoga abroad, students travelling to search for yoga in India; yoga as a trademark—tradition as a criteria of authority; yoga and religious affiliation; yoga and its salvation goods—well-being, salvation, transformation, books, diplomas; and yoga and its customer profiles—Indian and Western.[67]

I appreciate how far Burger pushes the economic approach, compared to many in the field who remain on a figurative level.[68] I'm not sure if I follow Burger in understanding books and diplomas as salvation goods, in claiming that the Weberian economic approach via salvation goods does not fit the "highly complex situation of encounter" with "mixed world views" and "culturally bound interpretations," and that market logic is not a sufficient tool for cultural contexts. As we have seen, if a salvation good is used in correlation to a *habitus*, then it can very well open up pluralist solutions to modern tensions. From the perspective of NIE we have been able to describe specific effects of yoga in human capital production as a central means and medium of transcultural flow. These changes in human capital stand out because of their eminent external effects: Regular yoga practice has a permanent point of reference in the challenges of modern work. Modern postural yoga has to be seen as a coping strategy for middle-class, globally-minded people in open and risky societies.[69] They may use it to produce public goods, to gain experience goods as benefits of a psychosomatic practice, to accumulate body capital, and to profit from the teacher-pupil relationship. Internalization of the mental model of yoga can go hand in hand with moral values that are relativist. Figure 4 shows the partial market of yoga in some of its dynamics, drafted in terms of cultural economics.

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[66] On the topos of yoga as a reaction to a religious crisis, see Singleton (2005, 302).

[67] Burger (2006, 91).

[68] See Carrette and King (2005), Knoblauch (2007), and Zinser (1997).

[69] Altglas (2008), Schnäbele (2009), and Strauss (2005).

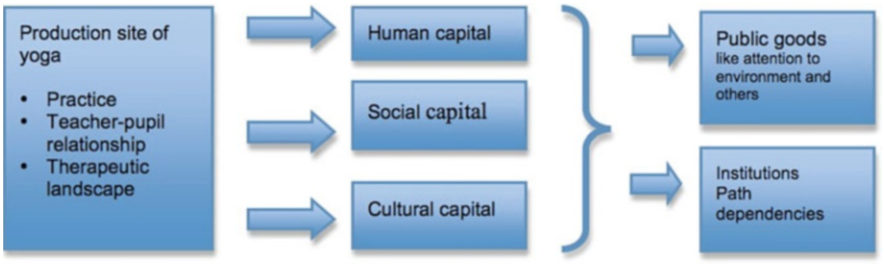

Fig. 4 The internalization of the mental model of yoga with some of its effects. Several sorts of capital are built up: human capital that also contains "body capital" (body awareness, techniques of relaxation, self-perception, techniques of calming down, strengthening and flexibility, self-care, and regeneration); social capital as a supporting network, an imagined community of like-minded people; cultural capital contains knowledge of the yoga tradition, songs, ethics etc. What some call "religious capital" may be seen as (embodied or habitualized) knowledge within social and cultural capital but not as a type of its own

Ashtanga Yoga, as well as other styles, is never monotonous, insofar as this product has a progressive logic. There is always a more advanced series or more sophisticated product supplement to attain for breathing, meditating, cleansing, or singing. For some high-performing business people, yoga retreats may function as breaks to enable body-mind regeneration after exhaustion and to prepare for the next professional startup or capitalist venture. The conceptual dichotomy of sacred-profane is inadequate here, but cultural economics can help to overcome this. All theories that, in De Michelis' words, interpret yoga as binding together "tradition and modernity, revelation and rationality, the sacred and the profane" have to take into account subjectivity ("transformation of the self") as the medium in which this binding appears.[70] The core doctrine of detachment and relaxation in modern yoga is a reaction to the enormous quantity of information in our society and unmanageable options for action. And in addition to these findings—which are part of an undercurrent in global yoga flows and need to be explored in more depth—not all yoga body practice can be seen as a means of resistance to modern economic systems, or even a counterculture of postmaterialism, but it is often a place of self-enhancement. Cultural economics of religion offers an opportunity to relate forms of late modern subjectivity, spirituality, modes of production, and work.

The idea of cultural flow can denote a space of encounter that is not characterized by exchange so much as a binding together through the fiction of "like-mindedness." This may be established through the yoga narrative and shared practice. But like-mindedness also allows each person to be him or her "self." In the light of these findings, Tambiah's assertion that flows intensify and sharpen socio-cultural diversity has to be reconsidered. It may be valid for the informal level of

[70] De Michelis (2004, 251). I doubt that yoga today should still be classified as part of the occultist endeavor to solve the sacred-secular crisis. Rather, this was on the agenda at the time of Vivekananda, bringing together diverging tendencies in late nineteenth century societies and helping people to cope with the intensified flows between East and West, colonizers and colonized.

yoga in regional partial markets, but it may be questioned with regard to very similar products in the shared practice. A formal homogenization can be observed of the organizational appearance of studios in local fields, and of tools, such as pricing. This adaptation goes hand in hand with a second, informal layer, the so-called "backstage" of regional modernity.[71] This backstage is very heterogeneous, as we found in our field studies. It is built up by combining body styles, and by interactive communication and the making of friends within smaller contexts of a subculture.

Recent theories of modernity stress the difference between local inventions and creative assimilations of modern institutions. They talk of multiple modernities and varieties of capitalism.[72] According to Eisenstadt, the diversity of modernity is due to the fact that modernity contains antinomies which are solved differently in different places and at different times. Yoga markets are a good example of this plurality of solutions. There is no unique market logic, but countless local and partial market logics and path dependencies. The regularities are not "logics," as rational choice assumptions might suggest, but empirically observable institutions in the sense of behavioral habits materializing in structures.

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[71] Holzer (2006).

[72] See Eisenstadt (2002) and Bornschier (2005).

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