

# Hatha Yoga

## The Essential Dynamics

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## **DEDICATION**

I first wish to acknowledge the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Tao Te Ching* and other ancient scriptures. These provide a foundation in wisdom that makes Hatha Yoga more than just contortionist gymnastics. I deeply appreciate the sound practical approach to Hatha Yoga that the Iyengars (B.K.S., Prashant and Gita) gave me. I thank Ingela Abbott, my ex-wife, for her early support and for the artistic grace she gave the illustrations. I'm grateful to my wife Leslie, sons Luke and Kyle, good friends Lynn Cornish, Tom Feenstra, and others for their help in editing, offering valuable suggestions, and generally making this book worthy of its subject.

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## USAGE OF THIS MATERIAL

This manual shows essential, but often forgotten, dynamics to apply while you are in the Yoga postures. Conscientious application of this knowledge helps you achieve maximum results from your time and effort.

Read the first dozen pages carefully, and review them occasionally to get a clear idea of what is involved in the study of Yoga. Doing one program per year offers a safe and easy approach to what could become a lifetime of yoga. That means for the first year you need only spend a fleeting 10 minutes a day. Done conscientiously, this will naturally lead you to *where you truly want to be*. That long-term result concerns us most here. After you have established your long-term practice, be sure to review the particulars of each posture you are doing, at least every decade (or sooner), to spot what will have certainly lapsed over time.

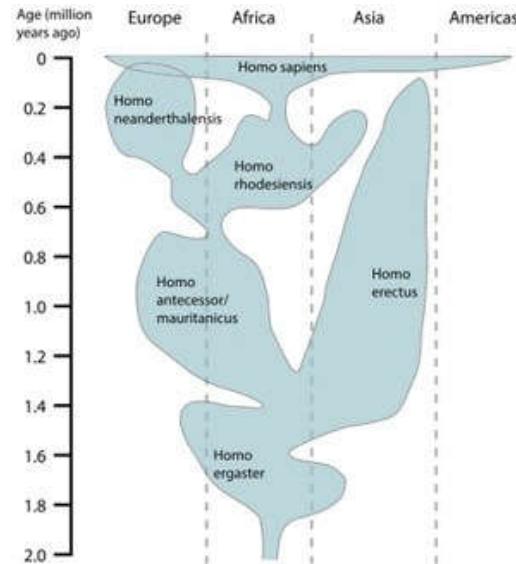
Photocopying the program page you are working from makes it easier to turn to specific information (illustration or lesson) in the book. Photocopying the illustrations of your program and arranging them in the order practiced could help even more. This puts the information at your fingertips rather than having to stop and thumb through the book (and cool down) to find it. In addition, video yourself occasionally to see what you're missing (reveal 'blind spots').

# The Tradeoff

## Jñāna yoga

Many of us find life very troubling at times. Knowing how humanity got to where it is today and what to do about it can put to rest many a puzzling and disturbing aspect of life. Jñāna yoga is a spiritual practice that pursues knowledge with questions such as “who am I, what am I”. This essay addresses a similar question.

To begin with, do we fully appreciate how recent the ancient practices we revere today came about? What drove humanity, after several hundred thousand years as modern humans just like us, to start suddenly down a path of such exponential cultural innovation? What deeper dynamics underpin religion, science, politics, literacy, economics... not to mention war and peace? Answers lie in the transition away from the egalitarian old ways of our ancestors to the hierarchical social structure permeating civilization... Happily, discovering real causes helps manage many of life's difficulties.



**Caution:** My goal here is to draw as complete an overview of humanity as possible using a minimum of words. The Taoist in me knows more words obfuscate. As a result, I must lean heavily on the reader's experience to fill out the picture. As expected, the big picture this essay draws makes it dense and not a quick read. Study it patiently to obtain the most benefit. Note, The Tradeoff is a reprint from [Taoist Thought, Returning to Original Self](#). Go to [centertao.org/tradeoff](#) for links to the pages referred to in this essay.

## Mental Pictures

Before plunging into The Tradeoff story proper, I would like to clarify what may be a major sticking point for many. The Taoist references in this essay can challenge one's traditional common sense worldview. For example, chapter #56 of the Tao Te Ching says, *Knowing doesn't speak; speaking doesn't know. Subdue its sharpness, untie its tangles. Soften its brightness, be the same as dust. This is called profound sameness.* Last century's discovery/revelation of quantum mechanics parallels the Taoist core view. For instance, in The Principles of Quantum Mechanics (1930), Paul Dirac contrasted the traditional common sense Newtonian world and the quantum one: *"It has become increasingly evident... that nature works on a different plan. Her fundamental laws do not govern the world as it appears in our mental picture in any direct way, but instead they control a substratum of which we cannot form a mental picture without introducing irrelevancies."*

Words form the framework of our "mental picture". Quantum mechanics is just a more complex and subtler way of putting the Taoist view expressed in chapter #56 above, and throughout the Tao Te Ching. For example, *The name possible to express runs counter to the constant name* (chapter #1) and *All realizing goodness as goodness, no goodness already* (chapter #2). Clearly, chapter #71's *Realizing I don't know is better; not knowing this knowing is disease* warns us of this danger of "introducing irrelevancies".

Our mind is so utterly linked to words and language that it is our main way of knowing we know, and of perceiving the idea of the self. Perception outside that box is nearly impossible. When all we know from infancy onward is circumscribed by words, our psycho-emotional security hinges on words and the meaning they convey. Words, and the language we weave them into, allow us to pin securely down a symbolic or generalized reality in a cognitively convincingly way. This is certainly useful up to a point. Still, how much is too much?

When we hear a word such as “tree”, we mentally picture a tree that has no reality other than in our mind. Even when we point to a physical tree, the word is an abstraction symbolic of that phenomenon unique in its own right. Words permit us to “introduce irrelevancies” which we then augment with emotion-tinged hierarchical “irrelevancies”... This tree is more (or less) beautiful, useful, old, or tall, than that tree. Conversely, the more thoroughly you view life from a quantum mechanical (or Taoist) angle, the less certain reality becomes. *Realizing I don't know* becomes easier. Hierarchy levels out into an egalitarian *profound sameness* wherein hierarchical “irrelevancies” can't easily exist! **Note:** Before reading on, examine the graphics in this essay. It is important to appreciate the time scale these graphics show.

### Polarity Severs Connection

At the outset, it is important to consider the era leading up to the prehistoric transition from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture. The discoveries of paleo-art of the Lower Paleolithic era (about 2,500,000 to 200,000 years ago) hint at the cognitive characteristics of this era's Homo species. What inspired the artistic creativity in this group of modern humans (Homo sapiens) and our now extinct human ancestors?

From a symptoms point of view<sup>1</sup>, the most straightforward hypothesis may be that this creative drive was symptomatic of these hominins' concurrent cognitive evolution. Language, and specifically the dialectic nature of human language, “introduces irrelevancies” that split reality into polar extremes: good vs. bad, beauty vs. ugly, right vs. wrong, life vs. death, etc. This dialectic characteristic, with its polarizing quality, pervades human cognition causing us to feel a visceral sense of disconnection from Nature, i.e., Nature is not reducible to polar opposites! The disconnect with Nature we feel drives us to find ways to connect and feel Oneness again — Enter the art, music, and spirituality of prehistoric peoples.

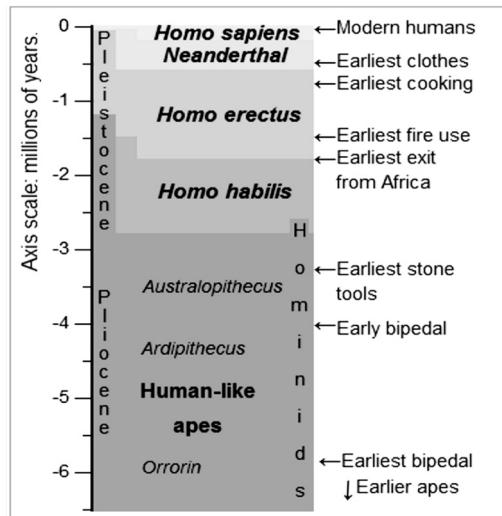
**Note:** The words and language we use to think about the world arise from the electro-chemical ON / OFF nature of the nervous system (neurons). This biology forces us to perceive reality in a dipolar way. While this ON/OFF process is just a speck of nature's cosmic reality, this speck is the primary process life relies on to perceive and maneuver through the environment (i.e. survive). In other words, survival rather than perceiving nature's cosmic reality is the driving force of evolution. Obviously, our large brain fosters vast and subtle features of this ON/OFF process compared with protozoa or plants, for example. Alas, that advantage allows human language to exacerbate this dipolar perceptual bias.

<sup>1</sup> A symptoms point of view, p.141, is the search for the underlying causes of observable phenomena, and the even deeper causes of those causes... ad infinitum. Here, the question reigns supreme; the answer becomes just a passing effect on the quest for noticing deeper causes. No leaping to the answer of the day here.

The Tao Te Ching points to how language supplants intuition with cognition in its disclaimer in chapter #1: *The way possible to think, runs counter to the constant way. The name possible to express runs counter to the constant name.* Even so, archeology, along with research of unspoiled hunter-gatherer people in the last century, provides abundant evidence that our hunter-gatherer ancestors coped rather well with this cognitive dissonance through their profoundly egalitarian social structure and shared forms of self-expression. I'll expand upon this later.

## Domestication Ramps It Up

The Tradeoff story really begins with the domestication of fire 400,000+ years ago along with some degree of self-domestication (Google, "human self-domestication"). Even so, the event that kick started our shift into an hierarchical social order occurred just 15,000 years ago, with the domestication of dogs, soon followed by the domestication of meat animals, plants, and another round of self-domestication for us. Yes! Civilization's hierarchical social structure is another form of self-domestication. Essentially, we forfeit some personal autonomy to conform, and thereby gain a secure niche in the social hierarchy.



The gradual process of domestication became truly problematic with the advent of grain agriculture, increasing population density and the top-down control of institutional hierarchy, beginning with fixed settlements like Jericho (9,000 BCE) and Catal Huyuk (7,500 BCE). The continuous surpluses made possible by grain agriculture are not natural in the wild. Surplus invites having, hoarding and greed, which stimulates the ego. This concurs with the "illusion of self", as Buddha pointed out in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Noble Truth, "*the illusion of self originates and manifests itself in a cleaving to things*". This enhanced self (ego) helps exacerbate competitive hierarchical instincts and suppress cooperative egalitarian ones.

## Divide and Conquer

The Neolithic Revolution, a global transition between 10,000 BC and 2,000 BC, added to the cognitive schism between nature and ourselves by displacing the egalitarian ways of our hunter-gatherer ancestors with the hierarchical social system we know as civilization. This new civilizing social model exploited hierarchical instincts at the expense of egalitarian ones to help effectively manage the larger populations made possible by exponential advances in technology and agriculture.

Civilization emphasizes specialization, and through various ways, such as calendars, expertise, literacy, social ranking, etc., essentially divides and conquers the egalitarian hunter-gatherer in each of us. The more specialized the activities of a culture, the more multi-layered and hierarchical its society. Indeed, niche specialization is the hallmark of advanced and sophisticated civilizations <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The more sophisticated a civilization, the more diverse its cultural activity. Diversity divides rather than unites. On the other hand, diversity is healthy if there is enough diversity to thwart a tyranny of the majority. You can see the inherent tension civilization must cope with. Continued ->>

Such specialization is socially disconnecting and yet essential for organizing labor and minimizing social chaos. Moreover, social disconnection deepens as a civilization becomes more sophisticated and specialized over time. This is an excellent and ironic example of how solutions cause their own problems! Everything has its price.

### Original Sin, Disease, and Free Will

The increasing sophistication of civilization over the millennia also aggravated the cognitive dissonance that arose during the Lower Paleolithic period. The socio-economic changes caused by the Iron Age helped bring this dialectic knowledge problem to a head. Interestingly, both the Bible and the Tao Te Ching speak to this knowledge problem. Genesis 2:17, *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Similarly, the Tao Te Ching chapter #71 points out, *Realizing I don't know is better; not knowing this knowing is disease.* It appears that what the Tao Te Ching calls *disease* parallels what Western religions call *original sin*.

Interesting also are the different ways each scripture deals with the sin/disease problem. The Bible goes on to imply that we have the free will to choose good over evil and thus avoid sin. In sharp contrast, the Tao Te Ching chapter #2 points out, *All realizing goodness as goodness, no goodness already*, i.e., the label 'good' awakens an opposite, 'not good', 'bad', 'evil', etc., making 'good' and 'evil' co-dependent. No wonder chapter #71's advises, *Realizing I don't know is better.* This is the Taoist way of avoiding the sin/disease problem... not free will.

Chapter #38 also challenges the belief in free will: *Superior virtue never acts and never believes.* The tipoff: This divorces action and belief from virtue, and by inference, any action influenced by a belief in free will. Without an explicit (or implied) sense of free will we can't honestly credit anyone for selfless acts of virtue, or by inference, blame anyone for selfish acts of evil. Naturally, this seriously threatens the hierarchical dynamic upon which civilizations depend.<sup>3</sup>

### Cognitive Dissonance + Social Disconnection

There are two fundamental and interrelated factors to keep in mind: (A) the social disconnection caused by civilization and (B) the cognitive dissonance caused by the dialectic nature of language. Each exacerbates the other. Humanity traded the social security of the *old way* for the material security of agriculture and the hierarchical social system required to support it.

This hierarchical social model counteracts the egalitarian social self-security engendered by the *old way* of ancestral humanity. That lessening of social connection (A) along with the language-

cont.->> Wanting to have it both ways is challenging!

Cultural life divides itself up into narrower and narrower niches. Think of any area of life and compare it to history vis-à-vis specialization and sub-specialization. Advancing technology plays a big part in this, but so too does the bureaucratic infrastructure necessary to support an advancing civilization.

Dividing culture into niches is disconnecting, yet for the niche's specialists, aspirants, and even fans, it does provide a sense of meaningful connection and life purpose. Overall, however, it works against the deep sense of social unity that our hunter-gatherer ancestors enjoyed.

3 See posts: *Free Will: Fact or Wishful Thinking?*, p.587. For more, review: *Of Free Will, I Am*, p.319; *Is Happiness In Your Choices?*, p.403; *Instinctive Free Will*, p.416; *Free Willer's Anonymous*, p.420, and finally, *Is Free Will the Only Option?* p.9.

induced cognitive dissonance (B) fostered a subtle, albeit persistent, sense of separate self that leaves people feeling insecure and isolated.

Self-preservation instincts then drive this increasing sense of separate self to find a secure niche in the hierarchy. This means specializing in a meaningful role in order to belong to society. The resulting niches of specialization divide and rank a population from high to low, usually in this order: gods, kings, priests, teachers, warriors, artisans, traders, farmers, slaves, and barbarians, or the modern equivalents.

In addition, the settled existence accompanying civilization allows individuals to hold on to things to develop and safeguard their niche — “To keep up with the Joneses”, so to speak. The holding on to things increases the sense of separate self — “the illusion of self” that Buddha pointed out in his second truth, i.e., “*the illusion of self originates and manifests itself in a cleaving to things*” — “things” include both the material and spiritual, the physical and mental. Such attachment augments the original sense of a separate self, which leaves one feeling more isolated and insecure.

To top this off, the hierarchical ranking of ‘good’, ‘better’, and ‘best’ combines with Buddha’s “*a cleaving to things*” to create another illusion — the illusion of perfect. This deepens our split from Nature. To paraphrase chapter #2, ***All realizing perfect as perfect, no perfect already***, i.e., the label ‘perfect’ awakens an opposite, ‘not perfect’, ‘wrong’, ‘faulty’. Perfect and Nature are incongruous. Nature’s reality is not a duality! The duality we perceive is simply a symptom of “*introduced irrelevancies*” arising from our cognitive sense of disconnection from Nature.

Given the increasing pressures to land a secure niche, to connect, it is not surprising that notions of free will, success, and perfection hold more sway. A belief in free will helps give an individual a sense of control over their life with the power to fill their niche in the social hierarchy. The free will ideal offers one hope that they can find their own way through life, and that there is the chance one can gain fame, fortune, prestige, rank, friends and admirers. The enhanced notions of self and free will help support and even drive hierarchical forces, and counteract the egalitarian ones. The illusion of perfection offers a way to establish hierarchical rank — a social measuring rod with, for example, ‘dullard’ on one end, and ‘genius’ on the other<sup>4</sup>.

#### Technology accelerates human culture exponentially

- 2,500,000 BC: Oldest stone tools (oldest technology)
- 1,600,000 BC: Complex tools like symmetrical hand-axes
- 400,000 BC: Strong evidence of cooking
- 160,000 BC: Fire used to treat stone tools
- 120,000 BC: Pigment use, emergence of symbolic culture
- 100,000 BC: Shell beads give evidence of jewelry
- 50,000 BC: Ritualistic burials, complicated hunting tech
- 33,000 BC: Cave art and statue of a woman
- 8,000 BC: Agriculture begins
- 3000 BC: Oldest known writing
- 2500 BC: Great Pyramid at Giza built
- 1200BC: Bronze Age collapses; Iron Age begins
- 793 AD: Vikings invade England
- 1969 AD: Humans travel to the moon and back
- 2018 AD: Global Internet, genetic engineering, etc.

4 Our innate social instincts also express themselves much more intensely due to the social divide that civilization’s hierarchical structure produces. This effect is strikingly obvious when this rift pushes human behavior to extreme, albeit rare, outliers of kindness like Mister Rogers, Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi, or of cruelty like serial killer H.H. Holmes, Khmer Rogue’s Pol Pot and Adolf Hitler. On the other hand, this effect is ubiquitous in subtle and insidious ways that often skirt our awareness. Fire up your ‘symptoms point of view’ and inspect aspects of society that concern you. Ask, “What role does this play in social hierarchy?” The connection will nearly always be there; you must just dig for it.

## But Isn't Hierarchy Everywhere in Nature?

Hierarchy is all a matter of degree! The degree in the ancestral *old way* vis-à-vis civilization makes all the difference. Civilization requires and promotes hierarchy. Heroes, religion, competition, rewards, wealth, class, sports, arts, music, knowledge, skin color, etc., all play a role in advancing levels of better vs. worse, high vs. low, etc.

Civilization is hyper-hierarchical, built layer upon layer, niche upon niche — all serving to disconnect us socially, yet provide a niche to which we can support and connect — to a degree. The point is, the hyper-hierarchy of civilization makes social connection more problematic. This exacerbates the sense of disconnection generated by the cognitive dissonance caused by "introducing irrelevancies".

## Enter Religion and Practices like Yoga

Another notable feature of the transition from the *old way* to civilization was a major shift in spirituality. Social institutions arose for disconnected souls seeking re-connection; that is the job of religion. Religious gatherings offer the promise of egalitarian reconnection. Actually, any gathering, be it musical, political, or a yoga class, offers much the same. Note, the word religion is from the Latin *religare* — *re* = again + *ligare* = to bind, to connect. Similarly, yoga is from the Sanskrit *yuj* — *yuj* = to join, to unite. As we see, both are primarily about our dire need for connection!

Deity oriented religions from Christianity to Hinduism generally draw on the simple hierarchical structure of a family or a tribe, where a father or a tribal alpha-male (a.k.a. God) guides his flock. In addition, deity religions — especially Western religions — generally support the idea of self, free will, and free choice. Finally, they depend on their followers' belief in the verity and legitimacy of words. The Bible offers many examples, e.g., "*For the word of God is living and active...*" Hebrews 4:12; "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*" John 17:17. (Google "Bible Verses Word of Truth" for more.)

Interestingly, the core Buddhist and Taoist paths, and yoga to an extent, approach religion (*re+ligare*) a little differently. As evidenced by Buddha's Four Truths and the Tao Te Ching, they appear to draw more on egalitarian instincts to push back on 'the illusion of self' and 'the illusion of free will'. This is not to say deity-oriented religions don't also tap into egalitarian instincts, but rather that they draw so extensively on hierarchical authority.

Still, the core of yoga, as expressed in the Bhagavad Gita, is more prescriptive and hierarchical. For example, "*For if a man thinks of the Spirit Supreme with a mind that wanders not, because it has been trained in yoga, he goes to that Spirit of Light.*" It is easy to interpret this as validating free will and perfection, which sets the hierarchical bar unnaturally high.

Nevertheless, the promise of controlling one's life and finding connection in a secure niche — in a "*Spirit of Light*" or whatever — is what we often yearn to hear. On the other hand, we have the ancient yogic sentiment, *Tat Tvam Asi*, "Thou art that". This all-connecting yogic ideal is a joining together, linking "I" and "that". It doesn't get more egalitarian than this!

## Tat Tvam Asi is Profound Sameness

The problem we Homo sapiens (Latin: “wise man”) must deal with is our illusion of distinction born of language and the naming that supports it. We think we make wise distinctions. Tat Tvam Asi challenges our cognitive perception of difference — our “introduced irrelevancies”. This “wise man” trait likely has its origins in what Buddha called the “illusion of self”. Naturally, some sense of self is essential for survival of any living thing! However, we humans have way too much of this sense of self, an imbalance going back to our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Civilization’s hierarchical social dynamics only exacerbate this cognitive distinction and its ensuing sense of disconnection.

Tat Tvam Asi corresponds to the Taoist idea of *profound sameness*. Again, as chapter # 56 put it... *Knowing doesn't speak; speaking doesn't know.*

*Subdue its sharpness, untie its tangles,  
Soften its brightness, be the same as dust,  
This is called profound sameness.*

This view of non-distinction reveals a subtler aspect of balance<sup>5</sup>. When “thou art that” there is no otherness. Without otherness, life can ride the wave of dynamic balance without dissonance. We can go with the flow, as they say. All this goes to point out how the egalitarian social settings of our illiterate “unsophisticated” hunter-gatherer ancestors helped imbue individuals with an innate sense of psycho-emotional balance. That sense of balance is the harmonious quality missing from civilized hyper-hierarchical society.

Our naming of things freezes the reality of the moment in memory, which we then do our best to impose upon nature’s wave of dynamic balance. Our fondly held illusions of difference produce and magnify a sense of psycho-emotional one-sidedness. Civilization’s incessant pigeonholing of reality increases hierarchical distinctions and we end up with a deepening sense of inequity even as we find our secure niche. We feel varying degrees of discomfort and scurry about throughout life striving to regain balance — to reconnect with the whole, so to speak. Again, as the Tao Te Ching cautions, *Realizing I don't know is better; not knowing this knowing is disease.*

## But Language Helps Connect Us

Certainly, language facilitates communication and without it, we would suffer significant difficulty. Words offer a survival advantage by categorizing nature even as their “introduced irrelevancies” disconnect us from nature. The innate need to feel connection causes language to evolve in storied ways that attempt to make up for this schism. This was adequate, at least in simpler times prior to civilization. Now it is often less than adequate. The words cause the disconnection, and ironically, we avidly use words to understand and increase our sense of connection.

5 The only time I feel ultimate balance is when all distinctions vanish. Naturally, that is a fleeting experience, but it helps at least to realize that the ‘no thing’ of balance is the bottom layer, the founding principle, the model, the ebb and flow cycle, and the primary pattern of emergent existence. No matter how I look at life, I always end back to balance as a key principle driving the whole shebang.

Balance is the fulcrum of emergent properties. (See post [Tao As Emergent Property](#), p.121.) Balance is the circle around which emergent properties play out. Balance runs the show. Balance is the lowest common denominator of existence — and non existence. Obviously, I can't sing the praise of balance enough!

Our cognitive dissonance along with the hyper-hierarchical dynamics of civilization deepens our sense of disconnection, social and otherwise. This compels us to fervently reach out and connect in a multitude of ways — gods, music, art, heroes, literature, clubs, sports, political groups, science... you name it! And, when this fails, we turn to drugs, alcohol and general self-indulgence to blur our sense of disconnection.

## The Old Way

In contrast to the circumstances of civilization I have just outlined, our hunter-gatherer ancestors had little opportunity to succumb to the problem of a separate self (ego) as Buddha pointed out, i.e., “*the illusion of self originates and manifests itself in a cleaving to things*”. Our ancestors, following the *old way*, were frequently on the move. “*The illusion of self*” could not develop as it does in the settled conditions of civilized society. Only when you settle down in one place for generations, can you accumulate enough things to augment “*the illusion of self*”!

Moreover, hunter-gatherer survival was best accomplished by group egalitarian instincts, with hierarchical instincts playing a minor social role. Any over expression of hierarchical instinct would threaten group cohesion and cooperation that was crucial for survival. In these circumstances, there would be little need for an ideal touting personal salvation via a God, a “*Spirit of Light*”, or whatever. The visceral sense of social security felt by belonging to one’s group was ample salvation.

In this way, we have evolved over millions of years, transiting through various Homo types — H. habilis, H. rudolfensis, H. ergaster, H. erectus, H. neanderthalensis — to the current H. sapiens. To assume we could *sanely* shift so quickly from that balanced egalitarian *old way* to the opposite hierarchical social system of civilization is a dream born out of ignorance. The irony is that we assume we can fix the problems of civilization by means of civilized solutions. This easily turns into fighting fire with fire, as history shows.

## Was the *old way* really that way?

Archaeological and anthropological research tells us much about the *old way*. One of the most important resources is the research done by Lorna Marshall, an anthropologist who in the 1950s, 60s and 70s lived among and wrote about the previously unstudied !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert. For details, see <https://www.centertao.org/kung>.

Note, I’m not claiming our ancestors were living in a Garden of Eden of egalitarian harmony. They had their difficulties like all other animals. I am just noting the naive tradeoff our ancestors made in their move to civilization. Up until now, our bias has been on how superior civilization and we humans are. I am attempting to reveal another side that we usually rather not see deeply — but perhaps should. This excerpt from Marshall’s research, The !Kung of Nyae Nyae, hints at what humanity lost in its unwitting tradeoff for material comfort and security:

The [Ju/wasi] are extremely dependent emotionally on the sense of belonging and companionship. Separation and loneliness are unendurable to them. I believe their wanting to belong and be near is actually visible in the way families cluster together in an encampment and in the way they sit huddled together, often touching someone, shoulder against shoulder,

ankle across ankle. Security and comfort for them lie in their belonging to their group free from the threat of rejection and hostility.

I believe that the importance of the group showed clearly in the way that the people made decisions. Women were as much a part of this as men. The people would talk together, for days if necessary, until every point of view had been considered. Our notions of secret ballots and majority rule would have seemed unpleasant to them—they preferred consensus, with everyone knowing the thoughts and feelings of everyone else, and everyone pleased with the decision. Our notions of individuality would also have seemed inappropriate to the Ju/wasi—they expected to function as group members

## A New Old Way

The hitch with civilization is the destabilizing price we pay for our material comfort and security. Indeed, this tradeoff accounts for most, if not all, of the societal ills humanity faces. Yet, we would not go back to the ancestral *old way* even if we could. Even so, there is hope if we can begin to comprehend the profound role civilization has had in creating the problems we find so serious. Knowing true causes always improves one's probability for effective management! Conversely, ignorance often ends up playing "Whack-a-Mole".

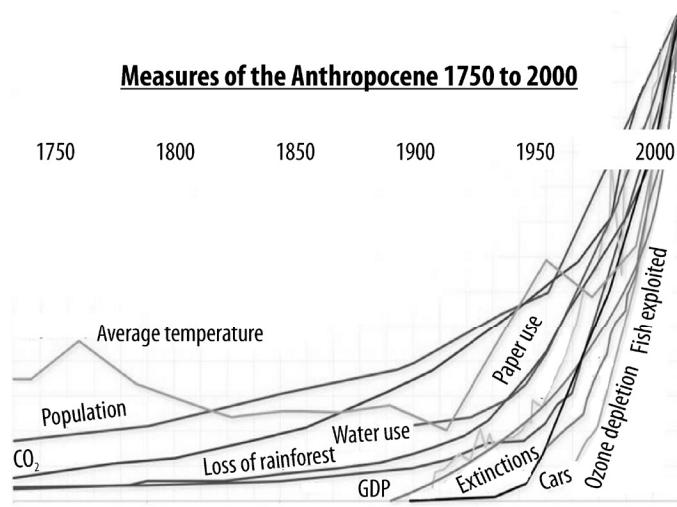
"*Right Comprehension*", the first step on Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, p.604, can help alleviate the consequences of hierarchical civilization and much of the ignorance that follows in its wake, at least on the personal level. No doubt, an honest public understanding of the underlying causes of civilization's problems could help society manage this current phase of our evolution better as well.

However, any effort to enlighten the whole population reminds me of the maxim, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink". People "drink" in whatever tends to support their beliefs and biases, and so we listen mostly to what we want to hear. Yet, I see a natural way around this.

## Onward to 12,000 A.D.

Civilization reflects the median aspects of its population's inclinations. A population's median age plays a major role in these aspects, i.e., our inclinations mature as we age, and thus so should a civilization's. In other words, the longer each of us attends the school of life, the more wisdom deepens as we experience humbling losses and failures, and face our own mortality and ultimate ignorance.

Life expectancy at birth was a brief 25 years during the Roman Empire, it reached 33 years by the Middle Ages and rose to 55 years in the early 1900s. Median age is a



more accurate way to consider a whole population; however, data for that metric is only available for recent years.

The median age of the world's population was estimated to be 23 years in 1950. The world's median age is estimated to rise to 37 by 2050. With the exponential advances in modern medicine, how much will it rise by the year 2100, 2200, 2300... 12,000? Put another way, a population whose median age is under thirty results in an overly active and teenagely impulsive civilization, as history shows. That would not be the case for a population with a median age of eighty or one hundred and eighty — I'm certain!<sup>6</sup>

In addition, a falling birth rate also moves a population's median age upward, and wealthier populations have declining birth rates. Don't hold your breath waiting for a significant increase in global standards of living and median age. This may take hundreds or thousands of years, but it's inevitable. Even if this takes another 10,000 years... well, we're half way there! In addition, the rate of change looks exponential judging from the Anthropocene chart. Yes, this paints an ominous picture short-term, but the median age is increasing exponentially as well, so perhaps "the darkest hour is just before the dawn". In any case, Nature is *always* in command so the cup is *always* half full!

### Adapting Moment by Moment Personally

Most of what I do in life helps fill the void in me that would never exist were I born 10,000+ years ago in the more balanced egalitarian and physically demanding circumstances of the *old way*. Now, like everyone else, I just hunt and gather in other ways. My quest to figure life out has certainly been a major aspect of this adaptation. I hunt and gather reasons for why life is the way it is.

However, in the moment-to-moment, the most essential hunt and gather adaptation for me has been yoga. By yoga, I don't mean any particular activity! To paraphrase the Taoist disclaimer, *The yoga possible to express runs counter to the constant yoga*. Let's return to the core meaning of the word yoga: "to join", "to unite". Any life action that fulfills this process is a pathway for moment-to-moment connection. Eventually, as the Bhagavad-Gita puts it, "*A harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake: a perfection in whatever one does. This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain*"... Well, peace from much of the psycho-emotional pain anyway.

This *constant yoga* offers me a way of paying a daily price for the civilized degree of comfort and security that I enjoy. Happily, a degree of life balance returns when I pay this price honestly and watchfully. Chapter #56's ***Knowing doesn't speak; speaking doesn't know*** reminds me of the maxim, "actions speak louder than words". To this point, Buddha's Fourth Truth states in part, "*There is salvation for him whose self disappears before truth, whose will is bent on what he ought to do, whose sole desire is the performance of his duty.*"

<sup>6</sup> When I discuss this, people often disagree that aging confers wisdom, and so can't accept my solution for the ills of civilization. Oddly, everyone says they are wiser now than before — they just doubt most others are. I understand a younger person's doubt; they have yet to acquire enough experience to verify this. However, older people's doubt puzzles me. Is this because solutions that evolve naturally and exceedingly slow are unappealing? (See posts Don't trust anyone under 60, p.193; And Then There Was Fire, p.296, and Counterbalancing I.Q., p.372, for more on the impact of a rising median age.)

Naturally, *duty* here is anything you sincerely feel a need to do right — *a perfection in whatever one does*. This applies to conforming to any activity, physical or intellectual, e.g., ballet, sports, math, cooking, music, raking leaves, brushing your teeth, and of course religious practices. Indeed, I can't think of anything in life that is exempt. (See also Buddha's Truths Pertain To All Life, p.545)

Consequently, performing your *duty* — *your constant yoga* — whatever that is in your life, can be your way of filling the void left by civilization and paying for the comfort and security you enjoy. A degree of life balance returns when you pay this price as honestly and watchfully as possible.

### A meaningful life means a meaningful struggle

Civilization's unbridled advancement of comfort and security allows us to take the path of least resistance more than would be possible living in the wild. This imbalance is detrimental to physical, and by extension, mental health.

Nature shows us that struggle is an essential factor in life. Take a tree for example, it diligently sends its roots down deep enough to fetch nutrients. The survival struggle lies at the root of its life's meaning, for a tree, for a humans... for all living things. Indeed, just consider how everything nature does has meaning.

All living things have evolved to struggle! In the wild, this struggle is obvious when you look closely at the lives and interactions of all living things. As they say, "it's a dog eat dog world". Living things struggle in two primary ways: (1) internally via the immune system's work to ward off invading threats; (2) externally via the skeletal muscle system's work to ward off threats, and hunt and gather the nutritional necessities for survival.

Evolution, in particular, is the process of adapting an organism's biology to its circumstance. This struggle bestows the quintessence of a meaningful life for all living things. Human biology evolved to meet the challenge of life in the wild, not in civilization's realm of enhanced comfort and security. Civilization's success at circumventing the grittier aspects of life's survival struggle comes at a price. Our survival energy ends up seeking other outlets —life energy must flow. Where and how it flows healthfully is the vital question.

For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we discovered microbes and, through proper sanitation, how to protect ourselves from them. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we perfected this defense further through antibiotics and ultra sanitation. It now turns out that a lack of exposure to, and challenge by, the 'dirty' natural world can cause a person's immune system to turn in on itself. Survival energy veers off course in unhealthy ways, e.g., allergies and digestive disorders

The same dynamic must also apply to the physical realm, and our skeletal-muscle system's need for sufficient challenge to thrive. Without enough of this, emotions will take on the struggle, as it were, and we chase after life meaning in other, and often more neurotic, ways.

The simple lesson here is that nature is about balance, not about perfection. However, civilization is all about the quest for perfection and its more-is-better ideal — perfection is King in medicine, music, sports, etc. I can't think of anything that isn't bound by ideals of perfection. This quest for perfection is, at least in part, a symptom of a fundamental lack of life meaning. In other words,

the quest for perfection offers us a kind of pseudo sense of a meaningful life. The primal struggle becomes a struggle for perfection.

**In Summary:** Too much comfort and security, too little exercise, along with our long-standing sense of disconnection results in neurotic behaviors, unsettled emotions, and feeling life less meaningful. Restoring the ancestral sense of deep connection is likely out of the question... social media notwithstanding. Indeed, as humanity succeeds in conquering its physical comfort and security issues, our sense of disconnection will likely only deepen. Our struggle for a meaningful life will increasingly take place in the psycho-emotional realm.

Fortunately, we can restore balance somewhat by pushing back on our ever-present desire for optimal comfort and security, along with any lifelong daily practice that at least helps connect us to ourselves<sup>7</sup>. In short, hope lies in diligently compensating for the loss of natural pushback Mother Nature would provide us in the wild.

## Diligence!

Buddha's last words were, "*All things are impermanent. Work out your own salvation with diligence*". This is straightforward, yet it is natural for any animal, human included, to avoid striving diligently when there is no clear and present need to do so. Free anything is an enticing natural illusion — a bio-hoodwink<sup>8</sup> I call it. In the wild, animals have no choice but to strive diligently and in return experience a truly meaningful existence. It can be profoundly otherwise for us, as we know.

<sup>7</sup> See Hatha Yoga: The Essential Dynamics ([www.centertao.org/yoga](http://www.centertao.org/yoga)) Also see posts, Giving Your Life a Gift, p.264; Tao as Emergent Property, p.121; and The Nutty Things We Do, p.143.

<sup>8</sup> The bio-hoodwink, p.11, p.100, refers to the underlying biological forces that drive survival. These primal forces of attraction and aversion steer all life's responses to stimuli. For example, sunshine attracts both human sunbathers and sunflowers. The difference between the two is the human capacity for thought. Attraction and aversion stimulate thought, which generates expectations. For example, take a sunbather's desires or worries about a vacation at the beach... not so for the sunflower. The bio-hoodwink plays out this way:

**Attraction (need) + thought = desire, positive expectations.**  
**Aversion (fear) + thought = worry, negative expectations**

Lacking thought, animals and plants don't desire or worry, nor can they form either positive or negative expectations or regrets. Our ancestors could, but their egalitarian circumstances helped minimize the potential for cognitive dissonance.

Having lost the deeper social connection of our ancestors, we compensate by "*cleaving to things*", be they physical (goods) or mental (stories, beliefs, ideals). This cleaving offers us a pseudo sense of connection and augments the "illusion of self" that Buddha described. (See also, Fear & Need Born in Nothing, p.485).

Nevertheless, when all else fails, stepping up to pay the price, your *duty — your constant yoga* — is as easy as it is unavoidable<sup>9</sup>.

### Postscript and Perhaps Future Epitaph

I've been trying to figure life out since I was about 10 years old. I hunt and gather answers which always reveal deeper questions. And I will be at this until I reach that happy hunting ground. Even so, I feel this essay is a milestone on this hunt. At the heart of all this must lie solving the problem of human suffering. This hunt probably stems from my inability to trust any cultural offering as adequate, although Buddha's Four Noble Truths and the Tao Te Ching have come closest.

That has forced me to go through life reinventing the wheel, as it were, which is not a bad approach. As Buddha advised, "Don't accept my teachings on faith; instead, verify them through personal experience". Indeed, how can we trust anything we have not found to be true through our own experience?

Usually people rely on the recommendations of others, but how do these "others" truly know? It all rests on blind faith at some point. Again, as the Tao Te Ching cautions us, *Of ancients adept in the way, none ever use it to enlighten people, They will use it in order to fool them.* It is wise to be wary.

My reinventing the wheel became serious when my brother died in 1964. A quandary over the nature of life and death consumed me for months until I suddenly realized that life and death were simply two sides of the same coin. This culminated a few decades later in the Correlation process which settled for me the word issue raised in chapter #1's disclaimer — *The name possible to express runs counter to the constant name.*

Overall, my writings reflect a search to sort out the diverse aspects of suffering, and offer solutions if possible. The Tradeoff feels like the culmination of this search. I now fully realize how much human psycho-emotional suffering is a direct result of civilization and its hierarchical basis. In addition, the sobering fact that each generation of a species, including us, is just evolutionary cannon fodder moves me to look to the distant future to find hope for our species. Seeing this as merely an aspect of Mother Nature's balancing process gives me peace. Although not a solution per se, perhaps this overview may help resolve some troubling issues for others. **Note:** I find it essential, however, to keep the gist of the tradeoff humanity made in a constant active corner of my awareness. *This serves as practicing of the constant*, as chapter #52 observes,

*All under heaven had a beginning; consider the origin of all under heaven.  
Already having this origin, use this to know its offspring.  
Already knowing its offspring, return to observe the origin.  
Nearly rising beyond oneself.*

<sup>9</sup> Judgments concerning what we or other people **should** or **should not** do are symptoms of our own failure to "pay the price honestly and fully". As a social species, we project, via mirror neurons, whatever is important to us onto others — and vice versa. This occurs in proportion to our own perceived failure to measure up, so to speak. (Correlations hint at what drives all this, i.e., *fear ≈ failure ≈ loss ≈ death vs. need ≈ success ≈ gain ≈ life.*)

This is not to suggest that you could be paying the price any more honestly or fully than you are doing right now. Merely comprehending what spawns your judgments may enhance self-honesty, and with that... Who knows?

*Squeeze exchange, shut the gates; to the end, oneself diligent.  
Open the exchange, help its affairs; to the end, oneself no relief.  
Seeing the small is called clarity, abide yielding is called powerful.  
Use the light, and again return to clarity, not offer oneself misfortune.  
This serves as practicing of the constant.*

The instinctive social need to help others has always induced me to think I actually can help. I now realize that a need for connection, social or otherwise, underpins every solution that we find helpful, be it in science, sports, shopping, religion, art... you name it. As a result, I imagine few will find The Tradeoff that helpful. Like the Correlation process<sup>10</sup> before it, this may only be a record of my own journey — my experience. Sure, I may help a little here and there, but as that old Gospel song says, “You’ve got to walk that lonesome valley, you’ve got to go there by yourself...”, or as Buddha put it, “...verify through personal experience”.

**10** The Correlation Process, p.565, helps counteract the problem Paul Dirac highlighted earlier — “...we cannot form a mental picture without introducing irrelevancies.” (See p.550) We complicate matters by attempting to alleviate the “irrelevancies” with a blinding certainty of belief. Correlations goes in the opposite direction by disassembling language and its words which helps to neutralize this blind faith.

Chapter #2 observes, *Hence existence and nothing give birth to one another*. The linear quality of language makes this difficult to understand. The Correlations Process can push the mind to make the necessary cognitive leap.

Speaking of the nothing, the Taoist view places a premium on nothing. Consider chapter #40...

*In the opposite direction, of the way moves.  
Loss through death, of the way uses.  
All under heaven is born in having.  
Having is born in Nothing.*

We instinctively focus on the ‘somethings’ of life, while the ‘nothing’ remains in the shadows. Indeed, “*In the opposite direction, of the way moves*”!

# INTRODUCTION

I wrote this Yoga manual in 1979. Now, 35+ years later, it still holds up. I've decided to leave the original introductory pages mostly as is, especially PRINCIPLES (from a younger point of view). These reflect my youthful belief in free will — that anything is possible if I set my mind to it. Naturally, it reads a bit strident, naively so from my point of view today. See the Preface, page iv, for a deeper treatment of free will, perfection, and self-control. These ideals can easily cause unnecessary stress. A better understanding of their origin can help. The Preface also covers the deep background of yoga, which may help keep your yogic priorities in order.

## PRINCIPLES

*(from a younger point of view)*

All living things strive for homeostasis. This is the state of physiological and psychological equilibrium produced by a balancing of the life process. The Yogi realizes this is a cornerstone of contentment. This involves having both good health and an ability to avoid the turmoil of compulsive emotions that inevitably cause confusion, anxiety, stress, and depression.

Beyond this, the Yogi yearns for a deep and broad awareness of life. As this awakens, his main objective is maintaining this awareness under all conditions possible. Clearly though, to achieve and sustain this quality of perception, the mind must be free of its over-reactive nature. Indeed, how can the mind be aware of the subtle while it is being continually agitated by emotions of anger, fear, and compulsive desire?

Sound physical health aids in the process of increasing awareness and control. Consciousness, manifested through the nervous system, is influenced by the vitality of the other body systems. Unfortunately, modern living causes atrophy of the original health you were born with. The natural animal vitality as seen in the wilderness begins disappearing in the human even by the time he starts school.

Significant recovery of original vitality depends upon the efficient functioning of each body system.

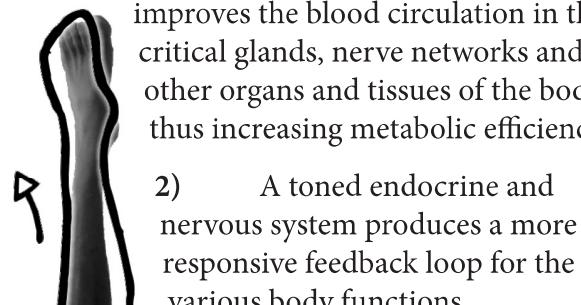
This depends upon one fundamental evolutionary law:

Development follows the utilization of potential. For example, increasing use of a weak heart through exercise develops micro-circulation in this muscle. This helps keep it disease-free. In Hatha Yoga, better health is achieved by challenging all weaknesses. This increases the efficiency of all major and "minor" parts of the body.

The body systems are intimately interconnected, so even subtle changes in one area eventually affect the whole body. With this in mind, observe below what happens physiologically through Hatha Yoga.

The body systems develop through several events occurring simultaneously in each posture: A total relaxation and stretching of some muscle groups and organs, intensive contraction of others, and controlled diaphragmic breathing. These are some of the results:

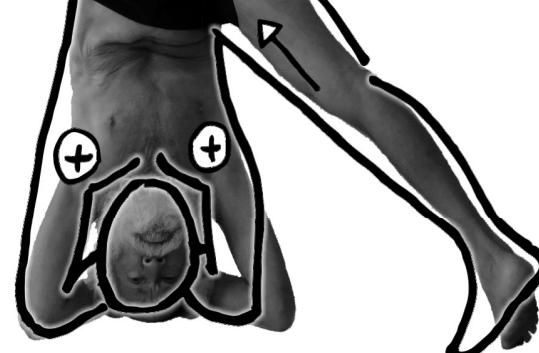
- 1) Increased capillarity and blood cell count improves the blood circulation in the critical glands, nerve networks and other organs and tissues of the body, thus increasing metabolic efficiency.



- 2) A toned endocrine and nervous system produces a more responsive feedback loop for the various body functions.

The body's physical and mental harmony relies on the efficient functioning of this loop and its associated system, circulation.

- 3) A massaged lymphatic system drains the body of dead cells and toxins, and





improves inter-cellular circulation and absorption of body nutrients.

- 4) A massaged digestive system speeds up and improves nutrition absorption and waste elimination in the intestines, thus helping to avoid illnesses of the digestive tract.
- 5) A toned, strong, and limber muscular system gives you a comfortable, well-functioning body for the rest of your life.

In addition, each posture is a physical “mantra” that, through watchful practice, pulls the mind into a meditative state. This aligns billions of cortical synapses into better-integrated neural matrixes that facilitate memory, concentration, relaxation, and even depth of awareness.

The unique thing about Hatha Yoga is the condition under which this meditation takes place. To sit calmly and meditate is one thing; to remain calm and meditate even under difficult active conditions is a unique and valuable kind of meditation.

Developing psychological health depends on the same evolutionary law governing physiological health. In Hatha Yoga, both physical and mental powers are developed simultaneously, and assist each other in the process. The meaning of Hatha Yoga tells us why.

Hatha is actually two words, Ha and Tha. **Ha** (sun) is work, the “burning fire” of the body radiating energy, and **Tha** (moon) is the reflective quality of mind; the deepest root of awareness that watches. **Yoga** means a merging or joining. So this is the Yoga of Ha and Tha; the union of the reflective, still mind and the creative, active body.

The mind is always agitated to some degree, especially when confronting difficulty. In Hatha

Yoga you go to your physical limits. This demand for perfection in action brings you to your mental and emotional limits. Thus, you are brought head on into the usual emotional reactions that disturb daily life, i.e. compulsive expectations, frustration, insecurity, and confusion. These reactive psychological states upset homeostasis, and hinder contentment.

In Hatha Yoga, you voluntarily face up to, and gradually deal with these reactions. Your objective is to work hard while maintaining the subtlest awareness: to watch but not get emotionally dragged into the battle of life. This challenge brings all the major and minor powers of the mind into play.

Hatha Yoga deliberately sets up a situation in which you can discover, use, and (over time) strengthen these aspects of self-harmony: reason, vitality, patience, carefulness, attention, and a peaceful sense of “self-surrender”.

These powers help you keep perspective that calms restless desires and destructive reactions. This liberation of the mind, along with good health, helps bring deeper contentment within reach.

*“Do thy work in the peace of Yoga and, free from compulsive desires, be not moved in success or in failure. Yoga is evenness of mind - a peace that is ever the same”. Bhagavad Gita 2-48*

## PRACTICE

To develop vitality, you must use it. Therefore, direct your ‘energy flow’ from toes to fingers. Constantly challenge the weak and dull areas of the body, emotions, and mind. Let the life force surge





through you. Without expecting perfection, work with perfection. Sweat!

To develop a watchful mind you must surrender and devote your self to every moment of every activity. Live in the fire of the senses and watch the nature of activity and the attitude behind it. Notice the quality. What is in the activity that "shouldn't be", and what isn't in the activity that "should be". Finally, let go of thoughts and feel the silence and stillness. Watch!

Here are more points that help you attain a balanced use of mind and body. Development depends on the extent to which you remember and use them.

#### Do You:

- 1) Practice daily and sufficiently.
- 2) Extend spine from sacral to cervical.
- 3) Extend the base of the neck (the root of watchfulness).
- 4) Extend the ribs and raise the sternum.
- 5) Roll the shoulders back and down.
- 6) Contract or open the buttocks as required.
- 7) Straighten and lock the arms and legs as required.
- 8) Keep beauty and symmetry in the form.
- 9) Completely relax facial muscles; jaw, around eyes and mouth, forehead, throat, tongue, temples, and any part of the limbs or trunk not working for the posture.
- 10) Keep the mouth shut with the teeth just lightly touching.
- 11) Keep the eyes open with the gaze steady but not strained.
- 12) Keep your gaze at nose level (usually), and never cross-eyed.
- 13) Hold postures for a set time, 15-60 seconds (6 - 18 breaths).
- 14) Maintain as even a diaphragmatic breathing as possible under the conditions and avoid holding the breath.
- 15) On the exhalation, extend and move into the posture.
- 16) On the inhalation, return from the extension.
- 17) Breathe through the nostrils and avoid grunting.
- 18) Avoid cheating in the postures to make them easier.
- 19) Remember that if a posture is easy or boring, it is being done wrong.
- 20) Remember that body heat is proportional to challenge.
- 21) Watch for, challenge, and patiently extend your limits without overworking them.
- 22) Apply the most effort/time to your weakest areas.
- 23) Avoid ALL rushing. Take deliberate care in activity and in attitude.
- 24) Use long, even exhalations to deepen the extension. This is especially true for painful postures.



25) Use appropriate effort, i.e., strive to decrease involuntary actions and reactions and increase voluntary ones.

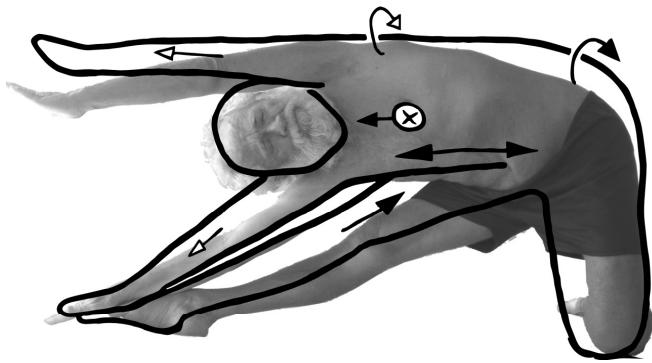
Many of the points listed above could be practiced in ALL your activity throughout the day. Look carefully at your own life actions and attitudes.

How do you sit, stand, or walk? Do you lean against things? Why? How do you eat, put on shoes, wash the dishes, brush teeth, deal with people, or get out of bed? Why do you sleep too much or too little? Why aren't you always honest? Do you maximize consumption of fresh vegetables, and fruit, and moderate your consumption of grain, meat and dairy?

How do you deal with success and failure? Do you expect things of others, while you blindly (or knowingly) repeat essentially the same "sins"? Are you irritated (a subtle anger) by the faults of others or by unpleasant events? Why? Is your mind flitting about on trivia? Are you a pawn in the grip of compulsive desire and worry? Do you let endless petty fears dictate your life?

Why aren't all these aspects of your life guided by watchfulness to develop a more appropriate and balanced response? There can be no real contentment or fulfillment in life with this left unattended.

The degree of self-balance you achieve in this life hinges on watchfulness. Watchfulness enables you to notice the seeds of compulsive reactions, which helps you avoid subsequent over-reaction. This active but non-attached attention can and should be practiced throughout the day, moment to moment, in the most "boring" and mundane to the



most "important" and stimulating matters. Only then can it become a significant force in your life.

*"A harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake. A perfection in all that one does. This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain,"  
Bhagavad Gita 6-17*

## HINTS AND PRECAUTIONS

- 1) It is wise to begin Yoga with a realization that years of physical and mental neglect cannot be overcome by a few months or even a few years of Yoga practice — especially if not done conscientiously. In Yoga, you work step by step with daily effort, dealing with the deep causes of your "problem" and not just with the relief of symptoms.
- 2) Practicing the postures in the early morning when the body and mind are fresh and the determination is strong will do much to set the whole day going well. In addition, the postures are best done when the bowels, bladder, and stomach are empty, which is more likely before breakfast. Otherwise, the postures can be done from 2-6 hours after a meal, depending on what and how much you have eaten and the type of postures you do.
- 3) People with high blood pressure may have to take precautions in the inverted postures. Ask your doctor. Women perhaps shouldn't do the inverted postures during menstruation. No one should do postures during fever, headache (severe), or with other acute symptoms.
- 4) The graph (next page) is a tool for directing your forgetful and scattered mind. It can work as a mirror to show you how much your daily life reflects the actions and attitudes which you feel contribute to self-balance.



It reminds you of your priorities and allows you to keep a record of practice that cuts down on self-deception. It helps you begin to see yourself in a truer perspective. Without that, you end up repeating the same old straying from what you truly want of life.

You can change the five aspects I list there to anything you believe to be important for your life. Some miscellaneous factors to keep track of might be: posture, brushing teeth, doing responsibilities, speech, smoking and eating habits, being too tidy or too sloppy, being too frank or too deceptive, being too lazy or overworking, being too friendly or too reserved, etc. The idea is not to 'change' any of these. Merely being aware of them is enough; true change happens naturally.

The graph area with the numbers 1-5 allows you to plot an in-line graph. After a few months you'll have a good indication of the "flow" of your life.

5) Daily practice is vital for Yoga to be effective. Beginners during the first year should spend at least 10 minutes a day on their home practice. Those who wish to realize the full potential of Hatha Yoga must work towards the advanced postures. As you do this, your practice will gradually increase to about an hour a day. If this seems a bit much, think of all the "wasted" moments of the day, i.e., idle talk, drifting thoughts, indecision, procrastination, trivia.

Yoga can transform such dead-and-gone-before-you-know-it moments into awakened ones. In fact, due to increases in overall life efficiency, you will end up with more time than you had before.

6) Initially you will have difficulty getting into and holding some of the postures. Try some of the "impossible ones" each day as best you can. They are certain to come in time. Don't expect results, just work with full energy and be patient. Working with full energy, however, doesn't mean over-exerting yourself! Take it easy in the beginning. Try easier variations  
(Var: ) first.

To avoid injury, always be wary of sharp, acute pain. Back off if you feel that. Good pain is sweat pain, the soft smooth agony / ecstasy of hard work. Speaking of work, you can browse through all the posture illustrations and try ones that look like

they'd be just plain old work. No "proper" sequence is necessary. Do what suits your body at the time. As the body changes (flexibility, strength, or weight) you'll adjust your practice to suit.

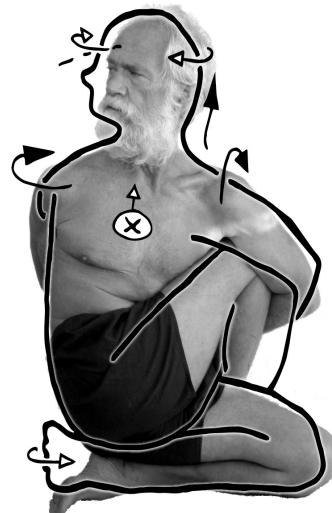
7) Scriptures can help cultivate how to approach Hatha Yoga to achieve truly 'yogic' results. Study a verse from the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Buddha, the *Tao Te Ching*, Christ, etc., every few days. Reflect on it during your Yoga practice and throughout the rest of the day in all activity. Reflecting does not necessarily mean verbatim repetition. If possible, just recall the feeling the verse gave.

In reading, try to see through the mystical, simplistic, or rigid language peculiar to each Scripture. On the other hand, avoid rushing through and dismissing too much as irrelevant. There is often a more profound meaning to discover when reading between the lines.

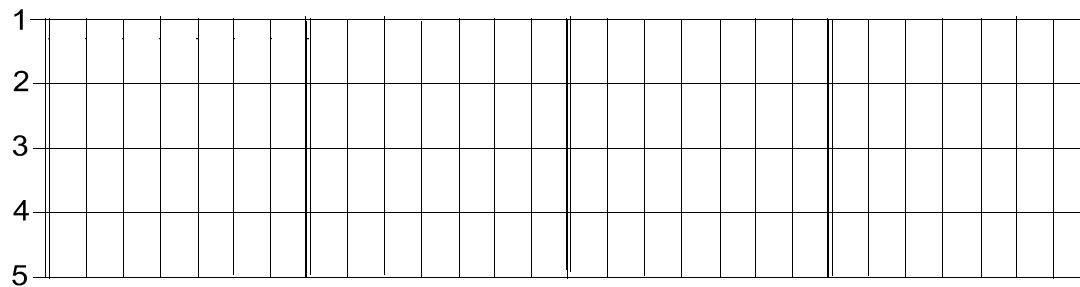
In a sense, this means interpreting the passage in such a way that "its" message makes you feel it is true. Regard scripture as a mirror of your own mind, instead of a prescription for what you 'should do' or proscription for what you 'shouldn't do'

Mascaro's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (published by Penguin Classics) is one of the clearest available. The *Tao Te Ching* by D.C. Lau (Penguin Classics) is one of the more faithful translations of the original Chinese.

8) By comparing the nutritional content of the basic foods (see next page), you can see that fresh vegetables are the only foods which contain sufficient, and indeed abundant amounts of the



	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
<b>Yoga</b>							.																	
<b>Scripture</b>																								
<b>Diet</b>																								
<b>Work</b>																								
<b>Contentment</b>																								



known substances the human body needs, without giving excessive calories, proteins or fats which, in large quantities, can be detrimental to health in the long run.

Therefore, it is wise to eat as much of these as possible or practical and then to fill out the rest of your diet with fruit, grain, nuts, beans, and/or animal products.

**9)** For help in learning how to move into or out of the Yoga postures, take a Hatha Yoga class from a competent teacher and/or refer to B.K.S. Iyengar's excellent book - *Light on Yoga*.

**10)** The basics of Pranayama are learned naturally, in due course, through Hatha Yoga practice. Insights into the principles of breath harmony are found in the scriptures.

**11)** The length of time spent on any of the various techniques of formal meditation is not nearly as useful as bringing meditation (watchfulness) into every aspect of your daily life.

Insight on this constant meditation is found in the scriptures. For example see - *Bhagavad Gita* 4-18, 6-24, 15-9 ; *Tao Te Ching* 16; Matthew 24-42, 26-41 (the *Bible*); and *Buddha's Four Noble Truths* (see page 172).

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The dynamics of each posture, as indicated in these illustrations, are best learned gradually. In the beginning, concentrate on the large black arrows. After you feel you are applying those, begin working on the small white arrows. Finally, search the posture and see if you can come up with some 'small white arrows' of your own.

- ( ) Area of **principle** concern<sup>1</sup>
- ( ) Area of **perfecting** concern
- ( ) Total **relaxation**
- ( ) Thrusting **out** of the page
- ( ) Thrusting **in** to the page
- ( Var: ) Variation for beginners.

The holding time is indicated for each posture (60s., 5min., etc.). Of course, you may stay longer or shorter than this time. Listen to your body; it will tell you.

Most of the postures from 1 - 48 are covered in detail in the Step By Step Lessons, beginning on page 174. If a posture is covered in those lessons, you see this reference, (see Lesson Index, page 174), on its full-page illustration.

<sup>1</sup> Only Programs 1-3 have this black arrow. After that you must determine the "concern".

Daily Need Food Type	Calorie 2000	Protein 40-g.	Fat 2-g.	Calcium 0.5-g.	Iron 10-mg.	Vit. A 700-u	Vit. C 75-mg.	Vit. B1 1.2-mg.	Vit. B2 1.7-mg.	Niacin 18-mg.
0.5-Kg Meat	2000	150-g.	150-g.	1.0-g.	40-mg.	150-u.	—	1.5-mg.	1.5-mg.	30-mg.
0.7-Kg Grains	2000	70-g.	21-g.	0.2-g.	21-mg.	—	—	2.1-mg.	0.8-mg.	21-mg.
4.0-Kg Green Veg.	2000	160-g.	2-g.	20.0-g.	1000-mg.	24000-u.	6000-mg.	3.2-mg.	10.0-mg.	40-mg.

Don't be too concerned if you don't understand what a particular arrow is trying to show. Just watch and explore your body in that area. Be sensitive to it and you will eventually find out. Some of these "energy" areas are not possible to feel until after some years of practice.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Advancement to each higher program depends mostly on how much time, interest and effort you put into your practice. Technique, strength and flexibility are much less important. These come naturally, in due course, with conscientious work.

Programs 1 - 3 require 10-30 minutes to run through once you know what you're doing. Taking on new postures one by one gradually keeps you in that content, 'you know what you're doing' realm. As the *Tao Te Ching* says, *Of misfortunes, none are greater than not being content with one's lot..* [46]

Programs 4 onward can require about 60 minutes to run through. The postures become more challenging, but learning just one or two new ones a month will keep it manageable. As Program 4 has 27 new postures, you will spend a year or two on it before going on to Program 5. With steady practice then, you may reach Program 8 in eight years. But who cares? After all, this is a lifetime journey; walk it step by step!

When you can do the majority of the postures in a particular program fairly well, you can incorporate new postures from the next program into your daily practice. When starting a new posture, do it after a similar but easier posture that you already do. To know where you should include a new posture, study the routine from the next program to see where this new posture is done relative to the postures you have been doing.

## Step By Step Lessons (Page 174)

These are a series of detailed lessons on most of the postures in Programs 1-3. Everyone, from beginners to the more advanced should at least take a look at these, especially if you are learning the postures on your own.

## MORE UNSOLICITED ADVICE

Note: The following several pages reflects my now 'older point of view'.

### 'Do It Yourself' Program

No matter what program you are on, it can be useful to read ahead and study the instructions given for more advanced postures. Much of what is said about these postures also applies to the basic postures you will be working on.

In fact, there is nothing *truly* special about posture placement in the programs. I can easily see other ways to arrange them. Each person is different physically, emotionally, and mentally. Thus, feel free to change the sequences to suit your particular needs. If done with careful consideration there is no danger.

Done recklessly, you could well regret it. For example, when first trying out one of the advanced head stands, I began goofing off and fell. I 'tweaked' my neck, and took over ten years to fully recover. Don't goof around. Pay attention and all will be well.

Finally, keep track of self-discovery by sketching in any dynamics you feel missing, or annotate the arrows already shown. If you feel it's an essential, tell me so I can incorporate it in the next edition. I don't know what I missed, but I'm sure I missed 'it'. Find 'it' and let me know.

## Getting Old and a Little Feeble Are We?

Well I sure am. The older I get the more quickly the years fly by, and the more real physical decline becomes. So far, arthritis is my only big issue. Were it not for Yoga, I'd be in much worse shape. As always, I strive to come right up to my edge, but now I must be more watchful than ever to avoid going over the edge.

## The Ideal Journey

Incorporate the principles conveyed in all the postures to your daily activities throughout the day, in every way, according to ability. This is the *ideal* long-term objective

That said, be wary of the ideal. Real life is what you actually do; the ideal is merely where you want to go. Whether you 'arrive' doesn't matter. Indeed, thoughts of 'arrival' get in the way of the day-to-day, step-by-step journey. As the *Tao Te Ching* puts it, *A thousand mile journey begins below the feet.* [64]

## The Feet and Shoes

Speaking of feet, one of the worst aspects of modernity is the ubiquitous use of shoes. The feet "die". Don't believe me? Just try wearing stiff thick gloves throughout the day, in every activity. The resulting loss of tactile stimulation from the environment is profound. The same is true for the feet, but we don't tend to notice this because we are habituated to shoes, almost from birth!

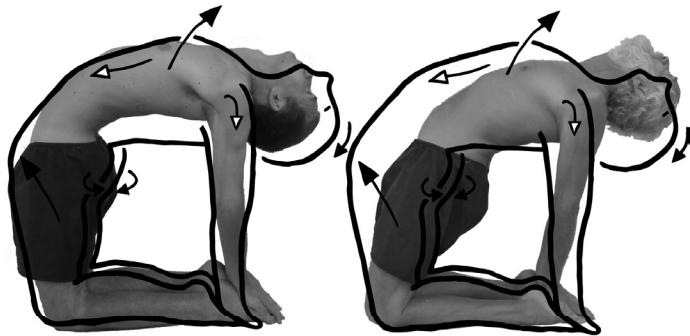
This loss of tactile stimulation has a real, if subtle, effect on balance. As one gets older, loss of balance becomes a serious issue. Lose the shoes and live longer, I say.

## Doing the Posture the Proper Way

There is no truly "proper way" in regards to how a yoga posture looks. In yoga, watchful self-honesty is the only "proper way".

The illustrations show you an ideal to aim for, and not where you must actually be. Eventually (perhaps years from now), you may be able to match the illustration. At that point, you'll just have to figure out a way to put the ideal just beyond your reach.

For example, the next photo is of my son Luke and I doing Ustrasana, a back-bend. He is fully



extended so the advanced back-bends are the *ideal just beyond his reach*. On the other hand, I have my hands full. Honestly, I'm also less inclined to develop back-bends. I regard them the least useful ('natural') direction of movement in the wild. However, for the pure yoga of it, they are truly what I need to work on most (obviously). The stiffer you are, the "easier" yoga is, because the '*ideal just beyond your reach*' is obvious. As strength and flexibility increase it is easier to coast and just 'look good', without actually doing Hatha Yoga.

## Feeling Hopelessly Stiff or Weak?

Watchfulness is the standard for success, *not how the posture looks*. Eventually you will enjoy a "pseudo-yogic" success as improving strength, flexibility, and balance allow your postures to look and feel 'good'. That's the icing on the cake. Truth is, success and failure must coexist in each moment. Yoga is a dynamic process where you exist at the limit of your strength (success) and weakness (failure) each watchful moment. It is not how skillful you are that counts in yoga. It is how self-honest and watchful you are. Only then are you able to balance success and failure.

## Again, These Are the Essentials

- 1) Watch what you are doing carefully.
- 2) Do what you can, not pushing too hard or slacking off.
- 3) As you become able to do what you can, gradually extend what you are doing toward the 'ideal' as depicted in the drawings. The key is to remember that this is a lifelong practice. Simply doing what you can is all you need do. That means compromise any way possible to adapt the posture to your particular bodily circumstance.

Taking such a long-term view is difficult. We naturally look to 'fix' things 'now'. In truth, time pretty much takes care of everything. All we need do is 'show up', work and be attentive. Do that and you can't fail!

### **Ha Ha, Tha Tha, and the Balanced Between**

Yoga, like life, follows a natural course. First comes the challenge of facing down fear: fear of hard work, pain, and failure of meeting your expectations. There is also the fear of embarrassment and censure, either in your own eyes or in the eyes of others. This initial exercise phase ('Ha') is the essential beginning step. It can be a hurdle. Next, you integrate the more subtle, spiritual 'Tha' into this base. This 'Tha' is the watchful, mindful, careful side of the Hatha Yoga coin. For some, it is easy to keep slogging away, like a bull in a China shop, on the 'Ha' side. Others get bogged down on the spiritual 'Tha' side, avoid jumping in, and instead passively watch life go by. Balance is the key.

I regard the *Bhagavad Gita* as the guide on yoga. One reason I stopped teaching was that many wanted to learn yoga as a body exercise instead of as spiritual practice. It boiled down to being gymnastics instead of 'Ha Tha' meditation. Folks doing yoga for 'body training' are overly on the 'ha' side of balance. Similarly, those doing yoga as a 'spiritual' practice tend to be overly on the 'tha' side of balance. Neither are very inclined to stretch to the other side toward balance, *at least not by anything I'd say or do*. I imagine balance comes to each of us over time naturally, if it comes at all.

I find we all tend to fall on either side of the 'happy medium'. We either push too hard (yang) or slack off soft (yin). Watch where you are in the moment and either 'relax' or 'work'. That is the essence of 'Ha' 'Tha' Yoga.

You are on the right path if you can integrate physical work (action) and spiritual rest (attentiveness) into a balanced practice. This is the only way to get the maximum benefit for body, emotion, and mind.

### **Yoga Classes vs. a Private Practice**

Doing yoga with other people has great benefit. It is both a social joy and a way to gain insight by

observing others. That said, take the opinions you hear with a grain of salt. I find 'the why' behind what people say (or do) to be far more revealing than 'the what'.

There is also a codependent, albeit natural, side to the teacher student relationship. Truth be told though, one can only experience the full depth of yoga in solitude. I'm not claiming this is preferable; I'm just pointing out an *essential dynamic*.

*Day after day, let the Yogi practice the harmony of soul: in a secret place, in deep solitude, master of his mind, hoping for nothing, desiring nothing.*  
*Bhagavad Gita 6-10*

A private daily practice is difficult. Over the years, I've advised people wanting such, to do just one or two postures daily and let their practice evolve naturally over time. Interestingly, I've never known anyone who could do that. Apparently, the "all or nothing" drive is innate, and perhaps counts as one barrier to a balanced life.

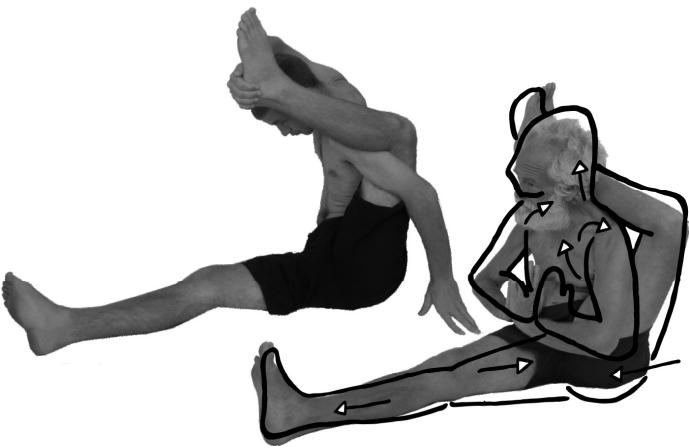
Social instincts are powerful forces (e.g., the pressure to show up, keep up, compete, and avoid shame). These emotions keep our nose to the grindstone in a group practice. A private practice lacks these social forces leaving you the sole witness of your life. Then it actually comes down to *what do you truly want out of life?*

### **Tat Tvam Asi**

Tat Tvam Asi is an ancient Hindu spiritual "motto". It means "that thou art". This speaks to the oneness of all. I see something else between the lines though in the word order: 'that' (otherness) is primary; the 'thou' (yourself) is secondary. Placing 'that' before 'thou' is humbling; it is one key to honestly know what you *truly want of life*.

### **Reaching for the Ideal Just Beyond Reach**

My wife's sister once asked her, "Why does he put his foot behind his neck? That's weird" (next photo). The reason I do is that my limit exists there—the *ideal just beyond reach*. I must go to my limit to work in the 'Ha Tha' zone. Only there can I experience 'grace under fire'. Both son Luke and I are at our limit; we are experiencing exactly the same yogic reality despite the different and superficial 'look' of it.



By the way, I may be more innately flexible in bending forward, while Luke is more innately flexible in bending backward. In addition, I've not done the advanced back-bends for 30 years, so I've lost some previous, hard-won flexibility. Now is a perfect time for me to resume doing them; advanced back-bends can give me an *ideal truly beyond my reach!*

### **Begin with a Teacher, then Video Yourself**

Pointing out that to which you are blind is an essential service competent teachers offer. Seek out one initially, if possible. Additionally, anyone can easily video their own yoga practice now-a-days. Doing this occasionally also reveals your 'blind spots', i.e., errors and ways you are cheating yourself.

### **Alas, the Word 'Limit' Limits**

The difficulty with the word *limit*, and words in general, is the often subtle bias they impart. Expectations (desires, wants, craves, wishes, ideals) of achieving an ideal, like "reaching my limit", easily becomes an Achilles' heel.

Perhaps it would help to think about *limit* in terms of 'weakness limits' instead of 'strength limits'. You'll never have trouble reaching your 'weakness limit'; it is the foundation. As the *Tao Te Ching* puts it, "*In the opposite direction, of the way 'it' moves. Loss through death, of the way 'it' uses. All under heaven is born in having. Having is born in nothing.*[40]"

From this point of view, when you feel lazy and just lie in bed, you are at your 'weakness limit'. When you're working with maximum effort, you are still at your 'weakness limit'.

A fundamental problem with words lies in how they serve as pseudo-objective expressions of emotion. Words give emotions a life of their own disconnected from their living moment. As thinkers, we then interpret any words we think or hear according to our changing emotional moment. This accounts for the myriad interpretations of every word ever thought or uttered. Avoid letting thoughts, names or words, trap you! Again:

*Realizing I don't know is better; not knowing this knowing is disease. - Tao Te Ching [71]*