

Yoga Demystified

**Each Moment Is
Like a Precious Diamond**

Bob Weisenberg

YogaDemystified.com



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CONTENTS

About This Book	4
THE SIX BIG IDEAS	5
#1 The Infinitely Wondrous Self.....	6
#2 The Infinitely Wondrous Universe.....	8
#3 The Present Moment	11
#4 Mind, Body, and Spirit.....	14
#5 Abundance of Joy.....	16
#6 Pure Awareness—Yoga Techniques	19
In a Nutshell: Continual Wonder and Awe	23
RECOMMENDED READING	25
WHAT IS IT THAT BRINGS US HAPPINESS?.....	28
POEMS AND MUSINGS	33
What If Every Breath You Took Was Like Eating a Bite of Chocolate Cake?.....	34
Please Help: Am I Going Bonkers or Have I Reached Nirvana?36	
Albert Einstein as Yoga Sage.....	37
Yoga and Mozart.....	39
Falling Head-Over-Heels In Love with the Universe.....	40
The Meaning of Life—Who Cares?	42
Imagine You Are the Sun.....	44
My Daughter Doesn't Understand Me	45
Flamenco Guitar as Yoga Philosophy	46

Have You Ever Been to the Grand Canyon?	48
Is Al Franken a Yogi?	50
Silence is the Roar of the Universe	52
Your Next Masterpiece	53
Enlightenment in a Snow Shovel	55
Can Yogis Be Jealous?	57
Like Waves or Ocean?	58
Living Upside Down	59
What is “That” and Why am I “That”?	61
Soulmates	64
Different Yoga Strokes for Different Yoga Folks	66
Compassion ate Yogis	68
Honey I Shrunk the Kids	69
Through the Window	71
Yoga Cartoon, by Simpsons’ Matt Groening	72
Each Moment is Like A Precious Diamond	73
Bob The Philosopher King	77
“God” or “Reason”—Is There Really Any Difference?	78
A Woman’s Dilemma	80
Coming to Terms with Infinite Joy	81
THE REST IS COMMENTARY	84
POSTSCRIPT – YOGA TENNIS	86
About the Author	88

About This Book

I wrote this book because I'm excited about Yoga.

It's not the type of Yoga most people think of as Yoga—the exercise program and pretzel poses, although that's part of it. Rather it's about Yoga philosophy, a 5,000 year old tradition of trying to achieve ultimate inner peace and happiness.

Yoga philosophy is sublimely simple, profound, and livable. Yet it can be difficult to grasp because of its unfamiliar language and complex history.

My aim here is to capture the essence of Yoga philosophy in plain English, with a touch of fun. I hope beginners will be inspired to learn more and experienced Yoga practitioners will come away refreshed and energized.

THE SIX BIG IDEAS

Let's begin by talking about the Six Big Ideas of Yoga Philosophy.

It took me awhile to fully appreciate the truth and depth of these six simple gems, but now I've pretty much internalized them and they have made my life immeasurably richer.

- 1) Each of us is already *infinitely wondrous*—miraculous, awe-inspiring, unfathomable. (This is well hidden beneath the distractions and emotions of everyday life.)
- 2) Our wondrous nature is the same as the *infinite wonder of the universe*.
- 3) The way to experience our wondrous self is to fully experience *the present moment*, since each moment of consciousness is infinitely wondrous in itself.
- 4) The *mind, body, and spirit* are inseparable.
- 5) Experiencing our wondrous self leads to an *abundance of joy and goodness*.
- 6) The techniques of Yoga, leading to *“pure awareness”*, are one method for discovering our true wondrous nature.

Let's take these one at a time.

#1 The Infinitely Wondrous Self

Each of us is already infinitely wondrous—miraculous, awe-inspiring, unfathomable.

(This is well hidden beneath the distractions of everyday life and emotion.)

Ask yourself this question: “Which is more wondrous, the entire universe or an individual human being?”

Think deeply about this. Most people can’t honestly choose between the two. The question is, of course, unanswerable. The entire universe is so wondrous (miraculous, awe-inspiring, unfathomable—whatever words you choose to use.) Yet, when seen objectively, so is a thinking, breathing, feeling human being.

The fact that it’s not easy to choose is fascinating in itself. And it’s a dramatic argument for the most basic Yoga idea that just being alive can be infinitely wondrous, if we let it.

For me this is a blockbuster, mind-blowing insight, and undeniably true. I had always thought of the individual human being as small and insignificant, like a grain of sand on the beach. And we are, in a way.

But each of us is also infinitely wondrous—so wondrous, in fact, that it’s hard to decisively declare even the entire universe to be more wondrous.

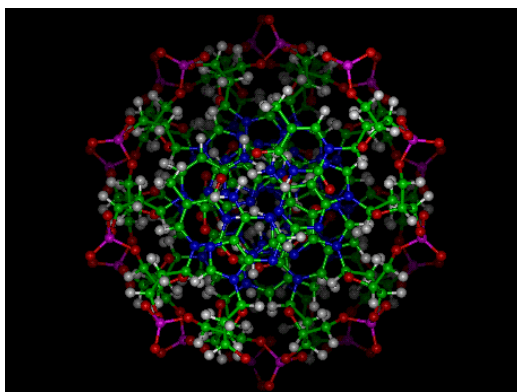
The universe is complex and unfathomable, indeed. But a human being, in body alone, is equally complex and

unfathomable, and, in addition, we are conscious. We are able to perceive the miracle of our own being.

(Yoga often uses the word “divine” for this. The most basic finding of Yoga is that each of us is already divine. I prefer the word “wondrous” instead of “divine”, because “divine” has too many other religious meanings, some of which Yoga doesn’t necessarily intend to convey.)

According to Yoga, this wondrous, blindingly amazing self is the “true self” referred to in the title of Cope’s book, *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*, and the process of self-realization, or “enlightenment”, is not the process of “becoming” something, but rather simply “discovering” the joy of who we already are, buried beneath the pressing distractions and emotions of everyday life.

For me the conclusive, objective realization that each of us is as wondrous (“divine” if you prefer) as the entire universe is like a light switch that changes everything about the way I think about myself and my life.



#2 The Infinitely Wondrous Universe

***Our wondrous nature is the same as the
infinite wonder of the universe.***

What fills you with wonder and awe? Is it the staggering beauty of the Grand Canyon? A Mozart opera? Walking through a garden blooming with flowers? A jumbo jet passing overhead? The birth of a child? A Brett Favre touchdown pass?

The big things are obvious. We all know what that kind of wonder feels like.

The wonder of a galaxy is obvious. Think about its hundreds of millions of stars rotating around a central axis, and the whole galaxy itself barreling at an incredible speed through space. And then think about the fact that there are millions and millions of galaxies!

What about a paper clip? In many ways a paper clip is as wondrous as a galaxy.

To begin with, like the galaxy, a paper clip consists of millions and millions of things (molecules, atoms, and the even smaller quarks) interacting with each other in complex ways. Then consider what happens to all these tiny elements and how they have to interact with each other. They're not spinning around an axis like the stars in a galaxy, but, then again, a galaxy can't bend and spring back into shape like a paper clip can. If you were small enough to stand on the nucleus of an atom within a paper clip, it would be a lot like standing on earth surrounded by stars.

Now, consider what it took to design and make that paper clip—the metallurgy and engineering that led to the precise formulation of just the right flex, the mines that had to be dug to extract the raw materials, the processing plants that transformed the raw materials into the right metal, the machines that had to be designed and built to manufacture thousands of paper clips a minute.

Somewhere in the world, there is a person who is an expert in paper clips, for whom the whole world revolves around the design and manufacture of paper clips. He or she can tell you the entire history of the development of the paper clip, and what people did before there were paper clips, and who invented it, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of all the different possible designs and materials for paper clips, and the future of the paper clip, and where we go from here, etc. etc.

Convinced yet? In reality, everything within our perception is utterly fantastical and pretty much unfathomable. If a paper clip is wondrous, is not everything wondrous? What's surprising is that we are not in a continual state of gaga just perceiving whatever is in front of us at any given moment.

Really, living is like walking through an incredible kaleidoscope. Consciousness would be like a perpetual hallucination if we didn't have automatic mechanisms for just getting used to the pure wonder of what we see, hear, and feel. But instead, most of the time we are simply oblivious to it.

Yoga seeks to put us back in touch with the infinite wonder of just being alive, starting with the wonder of ourselves, then the wonder of the universe. And then Yoga wants us to

understand that these wonders are one and the same, because our wondrous selves are an integral part of that infinitely wondrous universe.

But if we and the universe are so wondrous, why don't we experience life like that most of the time? How do we turn this blockbuster insight into an everyday experience?



#3 The Present Moment

The way to experience our wondrous self is to fully experience the present moment, since each moment of consciousness is infinitely wondrous in itself.

One of my favorite Yoga stories is the one about the young American who makes an arduous journey to the farthest reaches of the Himalayas, seeking to learn the secret of life and happiness from one of the greatest Yoga gurus.

Once in the Himalayas, he travels five days up into the mountains, through many trials and difficulties. Finally he reaches the high mountain pass where the great old man in a white robe and long flowing grey hair sits in lotus position, staring peacefully off into space.

The young man sits down next to the guru and assumes a similar pose, waiting for his words of wisdom. An hour goes by. Then several hours. Then a day, then several days. Finally the young man says to the old man, “What happens next?”

The guru answers, “Nothing happens next. This is it.”

Every moment of life is precious and magical. We experience this not by striving to be happy, but by focusing, in a relaxed way, on the present moment. Most unhappiness comes from regrets about the past or worries about the future, both of which are greatly diminished by gently focusing on the present moment.

Yoga makes no attempt to change the regrets, worries, or other suffering we face, but merely to provide a different

perspective on them by making us aware of the wonder of life beyond our current preoccupations, no matter how important or serious they are.

Focusing on the present moment, we cannot help but become tuned into the wonder that is just being alive and conscious. No effort is required, just a relaxed shift in consciousness—a simple receptivity to the indescribable wonder of being alive and conscious at this very moment.

We don't need to try to force ourselves to feel good, as in "positive thinking". When regrets and worries occur, we don't need to fight them. Instead, feel them just as they are, without judgment, then gently refocus on what's going on right now in the current moment. The current moment is rarely unhappy in and of itself.

You might say, this is all well and good if one is already content and happy, and one's problems are relatively small. But what about the truly serious pain and anguish that happens in everyone's life, to one extent or another?

It would appear that the more stressed and troubled one is, the more helpful Yoga might be. Yoga and Yoga-like techniques are being used today for the treatment of even the most overwhelming grief and health problems, including tragedies like terminal illness and the loss of a loved one. Like acupuncture before it, "mindfulness" meditation is starting to be studied and proven scientifically in the West.

You might think if one is "present-focused", one would just sit around like a wet noodle all day and do nothing.

Surprisingly, I find the opposite is true. Since my regrets and anxieties are reduced to relative insignificance (still all there,

but put into perspective by the awareness of continual wonder) I find myself with more pure energy to do everything.

I'm able to give myself more completely to other people in conversation. I find myself enjoying or easily tolerating things that would have made me very unhappy before. I am more objective and creative about solving problems.

And, without being false, forced or even effortful in anyway, I do have a much more constant and abiding appreciation of the everyday incredible magic that is being alive.



#4 Mind, Body, and Spirit

The mind, body, and spirit are inseparable.

Yoga in America is best known as a popular exercise program and health club fitness class. This is what many people think of as Yoga in the U.S.

However, just because Yoga poses and movements are popular doesn't mean they're not important to Yoga philosophy. In fact, they are an integral part of Yoga traditions.

Yoga has always taught that whatever we think affects our body, and whatever our body feels affects our mind. The poses of Yoga are nothing more than a unified meditation involving both the mind and the body. And much of Yoga literature describes the body as though it were one big brain, with its "chakras" (energy centers) and energy flows.

Today the "mind-body connection" is pretty well accepted as part of our thinking about psychology. But it was still a fairly radical idea 15-20 years ago, much less 5,000 years ago when first proposed by Yoga gurus. (Actually, maybe it wasn't a radical idea back then. Maybe it just became a radical idea more recently with all our emphasis on the intellect.)

Before this starts sounding too abstract, let me give you a very down-to-earth example. Sometimes, when I'm feeling a little stiff, stressed, or worn out, I get up, spread out my Yoga mat and just run through some basic Yoga poses for ten or fifteen minutes, focusing on the present moment.

This leaves me feeling completely invigorated in mind and spirit. My Yoga routine is like a cup of coffee for me. It works every time, no matter how lifeless I feel before I begin.

Let me give you another simple example, this time how the mind affects the body.

I am a serious tennis player. You might recall that all this Yoga stuff started for me when I took Yoga classes to improve my flexibility for tennis. Yoga was great for this. I did become much more flexible and it did improve my tennis.

What happened next was unexpected. I found that the philosophical practices of Yoga, especially focusing on the present moment, and detaching my ego from the results, had a far more beneficial impact on my tennis than the flexibility. The Yoga of the mind had a bigger effect on my tennis performance than the Yoga of the body.

Many religions (and even some Yoga traditions), treat the body as though it is something to escape from, into the purer world of the spirit. The body is treated almost like the enemy to be overcome in one's spiritual quest, particularly in the ultra-traditional Catholicism I grew up in and struggled with as a kid.

Yoga is the opposite (at least the branches of Yoga that appeal to me). The mind, body, and spirit are inseparable and the same. We are unified beings, and our physical presence and actions are an integral part of our quest for happiness, not separate and distracting.

#5 Abundance of Joy

Experiencing our wondrous self leads to an abundance of joy and goodness.

“What did the Yoga Guru say to the hot dog vendor?”

Answer: “Make me one with everything.”

Good joke. But this is, in fact, kind of the way we feel when we’re most happy—one with everything.

The great gurus of Yoga and other Eastern traditions achieve inner peace and experience the ultimate joy in life by cultivating the boundless wonder of a child. For them every moment is the occasion for innocent amazement, even in the middle of the most trying circumstances. They still experience all the ordinary pain and difficulty of being human. They just process it differently.

There are certain types of experiences that can suddenly thrust anyone into truly appreciating the utter joy of being alive. The most dramatic example is a serious illness or a near-death experience, in which we are suddenly on the verge of NOT being alive. Another example is temporary blindness. Imagine being blind for a while and suddenly being able to see.

But we can also be moved to this kind of ultimate appreciation of being alive by great music, or overpowering natural beauty, or reading about an amazing scientific discovery, or by the experience of great art.

I'm relatively new to Yoga, but in a way not so new if the subject is "transcendent consciousness" rather than Yoga itself. One of the reasons I'm so attracted to Yoga is that I've had semi-ecstatic "one-with-the-universe" experiences all my life. They are like the experiences Cope describes in his book as the initial basis for his interest in Yoga, but far more plentiful. I seem to be prone to them, in fact, with or without Yoga. I consider this a great blessing.

I've had them in music, in nature, in literature, in relationships, in tennis, occasionally in religion, in business, in my family, in windsurfing (especially in windsurfing, where one must focus intently on the wind and the angle of the sail for hours at a time), etc.

I know Yoga is a new and different kind of pursuit, but I believe it is closely related to, and encompassing of, these other experiences I've had with transcendent consciousness.

The practice of Yoga seeks to make this type of ecstatic, wonder-filled, one-with-the-universe consciousness commonplace and readily available in our everyday lives. In a nutshell, it seeks to give us unlimited joy. (Sound ambitious enough?)

Yoga knows it doesn't have a monopoly on this kind of joy, of course. Yoga assumes itself to have discovered universal truths. If you look at almost any moment of pure joy it usually has this character of total absorption in the present moment, where all other concerns and preoccupations fade into insignificance.

So it's not surprising that one can come up with countless examples of Yoga-type present-focused joy in every aspect of

human life. Yoga is just a powerful way of discovering and exploring this aspect of our existence. Yoga didn't invent it.

That's the joy part. What about the "goodness" part. Why would all this self-absorbed consciousness-raising necessarily lead to goodness?

Yoga scriptures have strong and clear moral teachings, which are similar to any religion's. Yoga assumes that when we see ourselves and the universe in their true natural wonder, we will be moved to act in a highly moral way. We are much more likely to do the right thing in any circumstance if we see ourselves, our fellow human beings, and the entire universe as wondrous, divine and inseparable.



#6 Pure Awareness—Yoga Techniques

***The techniques of Yoga, leading toward “pure awareness”,
are one method for discovering our true wondrous nature.***

You might have noticed that I haven’t even mentioned Yoga techniques so far, except in passing. This is because the techniques are just a means to the philosophical end.

The poses, meditation, and breathing techniques of Yoga all have a central aim—to move toward “pure awareness.” Pure awareness is non-judgmental, egoless witness of ourselves and our emotions. It is what allows us to experience the full spectrum of consciousness—the universe and the “universe within”. Pure awareness is how we experience more fully all the wonder and awe I have been talking about.

If you are unfamiliar with Yoga, try this deceptively simple Yoga approach to see what I mean:

Focus on the current moment – what’s going on right now at this moment.

Breathe deeply, relax all the muscles in your body.

As a thought or feeling enters your mind, let yourself feel it as deeply as it goes (whether it is a regret about the past, a worry about the future, or just a neutral thought).

Accept and completely allow yourself to have that feeling.

Mentally step out of yourself and watch that feeling as though from the outside.

Gently focus back on the present moment.

You can see this is the opposite of “positive thinking”, which involves pushing yourself to think certain positive thoughts, and to push out all negative thoughts.

In contrast, Yoga philosophy involves not trying to think anything in particular, and not controlling your thoughts at all, except to gently focus on the present moment, or to focus your mind on one particular thing. This is actually not that easy to do at first, hence the many branches of Yoga that teach a variety of techniques. With time and habit, however, it becomes truly effortless.

When we are able to do this, the magic often just happens on its own because we truly are all already indescribably wondrous (“divine” if one feels comfortable with the term). The wonder becomes obvious when we pay relaxed attention to what’s going on right now, both within us and around us.

You might find, as I have, that this simple habit eventually starts to bring out the amazing nature of everyday existence, without the often counter-productive effort associated with trying too hard to “figure things out” or searching for something outside ourselves to “turn us on”.

Most other Yoga techniques are just expansions and variations of this present-focused philosophy. Poses help us become more aware of our bodies in the present moment. Meditation helps us get into the present moment more and more deeply.

Breathing exercises get us in touch with our most primal source of energy—our breath.

Some Yoga techniques have you focus for an extended period of time on just one thing, anything. It could be your breath, or your heartbeat, or a mantra, or a single leaf on a tree (or even a paper clip, I guess). By focusing so completely on one thing, you not only become super aware of your object of concentration, but also kind of clear out your brain to be more receptive to every other sensory perception.

Other Yoga techniques are the opposite—they expand your awareness to take in everything at once instead of a single thing. I call it “ultra-awareness”. You become very still and allow yourself to be ultra-sensitive to all the immediate sights, sounds, and feelings around you.

Yoga techniques can have a strong impact on everyday emotions. My own experience, paradoxically, is that I tend to feel an emotion more directly and strongly than I did pre-Yoga, but I don’t struggle with it as much.

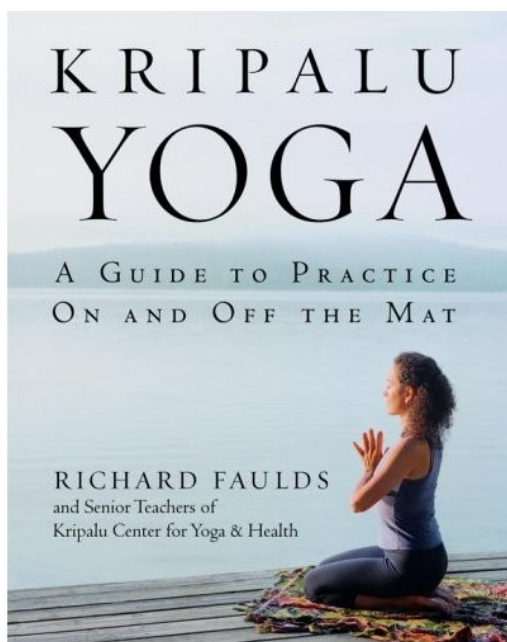
This is because, while I’m struggling with it, I shift into pure non-judgmental awareness pretty much at will, and this helps me see the struggle in perspective, and thus deal with it better without diluting it or avoiding it.

In this way, Yoga enhances and informs all our human feelings and actions, it does not replace them or mask them.

If you decide to get into Yoga, you need to pick and choose what is most meaningful and useful for you. The whole picture can be overwhelming and intimidating. The insights you get are more important than the specific practices you adopt. And, even though it has a sprawling 5,000 year old

history, ultimately Yoga needs to be about simplicity, not complexity.

For a broad discussion of Yoga techniques, just pick up a copy of [*Kripalu Yoga—A Guide to Practice On and Off the Mat*](#). And remember what I just said about picking and choosing.



In a Nutshell: Continual Wonder and Awe

For a simple renewing meditation, I often just recite these same six key points in my head as I relax all my muscles and breathe comfortably:

- 1) Each of us is already *infinitely wondrous*—miraculous, awe-inspiring, unfathomable. (This is well hidden beneath the distractions and emotions of everyday life.)
- 2) Our wondrous nature is the same as the *infinite wonder of the universe*.
- 3) The way to experience our wondrous self is to fully experience *the present moment*, since each moment of consciousness is infinitely wondrous in itself.
- 4) The *mind, body, and spirit* are inseparable.
- 5) Experiencing our wondrous self leads to an *abundance of joy and goodness*.
- 6) The techniques of Yoga, leading toward *“pure awareness”*, are one method for discovering our true wondrous nature.

As persuasive as I hope these cosmic truths are after reading this essay, it really takes considerable (but relaxed) practice to work them into one’s habitual everyday life and consciousness.

I once wrote to a friend:

***Just relax, breathe deeply, and experience
each moment, non-judgmentally, as it's
happening, no matter what is happening.***

That's a summary of 5,000 years of Yoga wisdom in a single sentence.

The central message of Yoga is that just being alive contains infinite and unlimited wonder (and meaning) all by itself, regardless of what else is happening in your life.

Yoga reduces the complexity of our lives to the elegant simplicity of continual wonder and awe, without losing any of the other things we treasure about being human.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Ancient Texts

To further explore Yoga philosophy, I urge you to go directly to the ancient texts. Although they have a reputation for being difficult, I personally find them to be exceptionally direct and inspiring, often mind-blowing.

It does take a little getting used to the rich metaphorical language they use. And they contain some ancient beliefs that won't necessarily make sense to you today.

But it's well worth the effort, and you'll find it very useful to refer back to The Six Big Ideas as you read these texts.

It's important to find an accessible version with great commentary. They are not all the same. These are the best versions I've found:

[*Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*](#) by Stephen Mitchell.
(See my review at *Falling Head-Over-Heels in Love with the Universe*.)

[*The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali*](#), beautifully translated and explained in Part III of *The Heart of Yoga* by T.K.V. Desikachar. (The rest of the book is good, too, but I'm including it here for the Yoga Sutra.)

[*The Upanishads*](#), lovingly introduced and translated by Eknath Easwaran.

For a quick feel for what these texts are about, see *What Is It That Brings Us Happiness?* (the next chapter.)

Yoga Practice

If I had to recommend a single book for Yoga practice it would be:

[*Kripalu Yoga—A Guide to Practice On and Off the Mat*](#) by Richard Faulds and Senior Teachers of Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. The title is self-explanatory. It covers a very wide range of topics in an accessible and “browsable” manner. You can get whatever you need from it right now, and it will continue to serve you for a long time to come.

ParaYoga

My favorite Yoga philosophy website is Rod Stryker’s www.parayoga.com. This is a rich and wonderful synthesis of ancient Yoga for modern devotees. Click on [LEARN](#) and thoroughly explore all the menus there.

Other Great Books

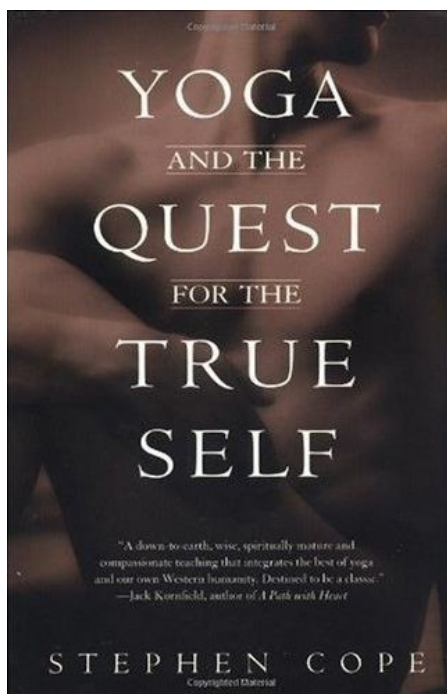
Here are some other books you might find interesting and useful:

[*Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*](#) by Stephen Cope. An inspiring exploration of Yoga philosophy, and its relationship to Western religion and psychology—the book that got it all started for me.

[*Babar’s Yoga for Elephants*](#) by Laurent de Brunhoff. Now the truth can finally be told—Yoga was originally

developed by elephants in prehistoric times, and only adopted by humans many years later.

[Effortless Wellbeing](#) by Evan Finer. My favorite book on meditation.



WHAT IS IT THAT BRINGS US HAPPINESS?

Monte the new young seeker

Approached the hermit philosopher Bob:

MONTE

What is it that brings us happiness?

I am deeply troubled by this in my life.

I seek guidance from your superior years

And knowledge of the ancient Yoga texts.

BOB

I will answer directly, but first you should know

Some people question why I should be called “philosopher”.

They speak with reason,

For I do not have the university sheepskin

Nor the Yoga Alliance certification,

Only my own deep study of the ancient Yoga sages.

But it does not matter what I am called.

Judge by yourself from my words alone.

All you desire to learn about happiness

Is to be found in the ancient scriptures.

Study the ***Bhagavad Gita***, the ***Yoga Sutra***, and the
Upanishads

Until they are as close to your heart as your heart itself.

Then you will know how to be truly happy.

MONTE

I will. But can you not tell me yourself

Right here, right now, what I am to learn?

BOB

From the ***Bhagavad Gita***

You will learn to live the life you are destined to live

Always full of love in your heart,

To live with great purpose and to act decisively

But with no ego attachment to the results.

From the *Yoga Sutra*

You will learn that the secret of happiness

Is strong self-discipline of the body and the mind

And the ability to penetrate deeply

Into the true nature of reality.

From the *Upanishads*

You will learn that you are already supremely happy

Because you are already perfect and divine.

You are already the absolute wonder of the universe.

MONTE

These are indeed overwhelming truths.

I will study the *Gita*, the *Sutra*, and the *Upanishads*.

But what can I do right now

To begin to experience these truths?

BOB

Focus gently on the present moment

Without judgment or ego.

Focusing on the present moment

Will allow you to act decisively with love

Without being attached to the results

As prescribed in the ***Bhagavad Gita***.

Concentrating on the present moment

Is the essence of self-discipline and meditation

As prescribed in the ***Yoga Sutra***.

By focusing on the present moment

You will start to see

That every moment is divine and precious

And that you are already the very life force of the universe

As taught in the *Upanishads*.

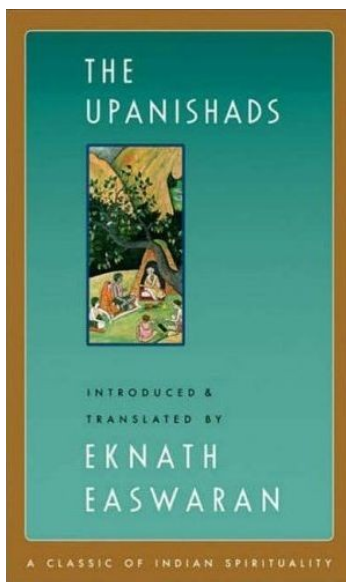
MONTE

My mind spins. I ache for more.

I will approach these profound and ancient texts

With an open heart

And a fervent desire to drink of their wisdom.



POEMS AND MUSINGS

What If Every Breath You Took Was Like Eating a Bite of Chocolate Cake?

Don't laugh! Think about it for a moment. Would it make you happier if every breath was like a bite of chocolate cake, even if nothing else in your life changed?

When I first started Yoga I was confused by all the emphasis on the breath. OK, I get it. Breathe deeply. What's next?

The more I learned, the more it seemed like Yoga had a serious breath obsession. It's the focus of meditation. You have to do it right when you do poses. It feeds the chakras (energy centers) in your body. There's even a whole separate practice for advanced breathing called pranayama.

What for?, I asked myself. OK, we need to breathe deeply. So what?

Now I understand! It's like this. Between a single breath or a bite of chocolate cake, which one is more amazing? (Any trouble answering that and you probably have bigger problems than I can help you with!)

The single breath is more amazing, of course, because it is the wondrous source of your very being – a precondition even to enjoying a bite of chocolate cake. You could say that the single breath is infinitely wondrous. Perhaps you might even say it is divine.

While I was writing this I started explaining to it my wife, and she said, “That makes sense, but you couldn’t get anything done if you were eating chocolate cake all day.”

I replied, “You’re right, but wouldn’t it be nice to be able to tap into that kind of “better than chocolate cake” divine amazement any time you wanted to, just by focusing on your breath? Wouldn’t that make your life a lot happier, no matter what else was going on?”

“Yes, of course,” she replied.

“Bingo. That’s what Yoga philosophy is all about.”



Please Help: Am I Going Bonkers or Have I Reached Nirvana?

Ever since I wrote that clever little piece about chocolate cake the other day:

What If Every Breath You Took Was Like Eating a Bite of Chocolate Cake?

I can't get it off my mind.

First, I read it over and over again, the way writers do when they're really happy with something they've written. (Other writers do that, too, right?)

Then I showed it to my wife, who said, "That's nice, Bob, but I was the one who came up with the idea of selectively tapping into infinite amazement."

"Artistic license", I replied.

Now it's just on my mind all the time. I keep thinking, wow, each breath really is infinitely better than a bite of chocolate cake. And it makes me smile. And I keep thinking, just breathing really is like eating chocolate cake all day. And it never stops. And it makes me really, really happy because I really, really like chocolate cake, and every breath really is infinitely better than chocolate cake...

Please help. Have I reached Nirvana, or have I gone completely bonkers?

Albert Einstein as Yoga Sage

Did you know that Albert Einstein had a very Yogic point of view?

Actually, this is true of many advanced physicists and other scientists, even if they don't actually practice or study Yoga. They are simply overwhelmed with what they have seen with their own eyes and minds, and come to the same conclusions as the early Yoga sages.

Here's a typical Einstein quote:

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.

This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty”

Does that sound like the Yoga of the Upanishads or what?

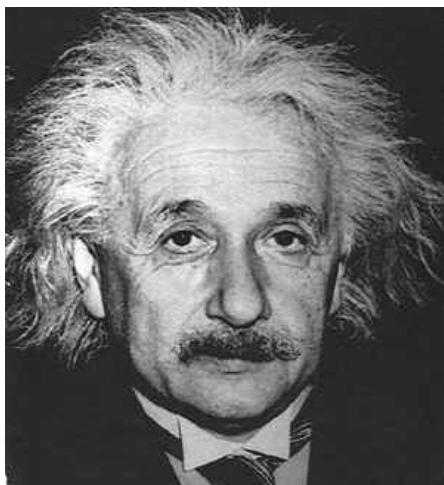
By the same token, the ancient Yoga sages saw themselves as early scientists. They openly rebelled against the overly elaborate, ritualistic, and irrational religious thinking of the time in favor of direct experience and experimenting with states of mind.

They defined spirituality in the same way Einstein did – absolute wonder in face of the unfathomable universe. Yoga is, in many ways, a scientist’s vision of spirituality.

“The most beautiful and most profound experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sewer of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead.

To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their primitive forms – this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness.”

(Albert Einstein – *The Merging of Spirit and Science*)



Yoga and Mozart

I've decided to dispense with Yoga
And just listen to Mozart all the time.

It gives me the same sense of wonder.
It fills me with the same infinite cosmic joy.

It collapses my entire being into the present moment
Where the music is divine

I am divine

You are divine

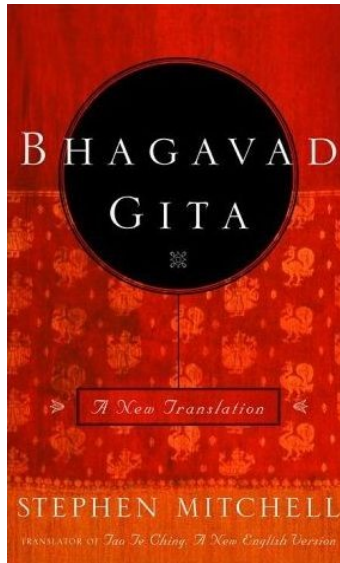
The whole world is one and divine.

I've decided to dispense with Yoga
And just listen to Mozart all the time.

But then again

Why not have both?

For are they not one and the same?



Falling Head-Over-Heels In Love with the Universe

For those of you who have always wanted to absorb the spectacular wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but have found it difficult, I highly recommend [*Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*](#) by Stephen Mitchell. This is my fourth version and sixth reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I have gotten a lot from all four versions, but Mitchell's is clearly the most accessible and enjoyable, without sacrificing any of the meaning.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is quite literally about falling in love with the indescribable wonder of the universe, that is to say, God. These two are synonymous in the *Gita*. (Believe it or not, the text itself says that you can approach God as either an

unfathomable cosmic life-force or as an intimate personal deity. Either leads you to the same boundless love and joy.)

The ***Bhagavad Gita*** and the ***Yoga Sutra*** are two of the most important ancient texts of Yoga. They could not be more different. The ***Yoga Sutra*** is mostly secular in nature, and mentions God only briefly and perfunctorily. The ***Bhagavad Gita***, in contrast, is literally “The Song of the Beloved Lord”, and most of the text is the voice of the awesome life-force of the universe itself.

The ***Yoga Sutra*** is a cookbook for achieving inner peace. The ***Bhagavad Gita***, in contrast, won’t settle for anything less than ECSTATIC UNION WITH THE DIVINE. Put them together and you have the astounding whole of Yoga philosophy in two relatively short texts.

Try Mitchell’s version of the ***Bhagavad Gita***. You’ll be glad you did.

The Meaning of Life–Who Cares?



According to the ancient Yoga sages

Questioning the meaning of life

While living

Is like questioning the meaning of a roller coaster

In the middle of a roller coaster ride

Or like questioning the meaning of love

In the middle of lovemaking.

Who cares when something is so amazing?

The amazement IS the meaning.

The amazement IS the ultimate reality.

The amazement IS the life-force of the universe

All around us and within us

Far beyond our ability

To absorb or comprehend.

The amazement IS what some call God

And the ancient sages called Brahman.

In the midst of the ups and downs

Of life and love

Just relax, breathe deeply

And experience the infinite thrill

of the amazing ride.

Imagine You Are the Sun

Imagine you are the Sun.

But, unlike the real Sun, you are conscious and all-knowing.

Would you take infinite joy in being the Sun?

Or would you envy human beings down on earth

Because they can walk around and play music

And give birth and laugh and love and do Yoga?

Should we worship the Sun, or should the Sun worship us?

Neither. Because we and the Sun are one and the same.

The same universal cosmic intelligence.

The same overwhelming wondrousness, unfathomableness.

The same quantum physics roots, the same cosmic dna.

Not to worship

But to mutually rejoice in the kinship of our molecules

And the ineffable wonder of the universe.

My Daughter Doesn't Understand Me

I sent my daughter a copy of my latest masterpiece, *Imagine You Are the Sun*. She wrote back:

“It’s a little too existential for me to personally relate to, but I’m glad to see a sample of what you’re up to! *I know Yogi Berra would love it! :)*”

Can you believe it? She actually wrote, “*Yogi Berra would love it!*”, with a smiley face, no less.

Not to be outdone, I replied:

“I know it’s not your cup of tea, but I still thought you’d be interested in how my crazy mind works. Here’s another blog you’ll enjoy more:”

and I copied her on *Can Yogis Be Jealous?*, the one that ends with:

“At that point we become blissfully purely aware that *we also want to strangle the other person.*” (I knew that would appeal to her sense of humor.)

And then I signed it “*Swami Grandyogidadananda*”. If she doesn’t understand me, at least we can laugh together!

Flamenco Guitar as Yoga Philosophy

Yoga is universal truth. It's just one way of looking at ageless reality. The greatest Yoga thinkers say so. If that's true, then one can be practicing Yoga without even knowing it, without even knowing it exists.

I've been practicing Yoga all my life, even though I went to my first Yoga class relatively recently.

When I play guitar it has all the elements of Yoga, and I've always loved it for those very reasons.

I am completely in the moment for hours at a time. As I improvise, I need to suspend my ego, or nothing of interest will emerge.

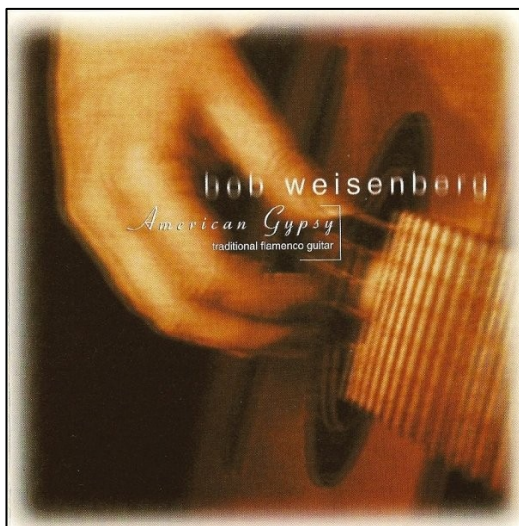
I relax all my muscles and breathe deeply to still my mind. I gently focus on the action of my fingers on the strings and the nuances of the sound they are creating.

I feel the music in my bones, in my body, in my spirit, in my emotions, only secondarily in my head.

I gently stretch myself to my limits, but not beyond. I lose all sense of time.

Without any intervening thinking, I feel I am communing directly with the universe. I am purely aware in a way that transcends normal conscious thought.

I've been doing this instinctively since I was 14. It's what music has always been about for me. It's the same universal truth that is Yoga philosophy.



Have You Ever Been to the Grand Canyon?

Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon?

How did it make you feel?

Did it fill you with wonder and awe?

Did it startle you out of your ego?

Did you feel the infinite grandeur

And timelessness Of the universe?

Did it make you feel small

Yet in a strange but unmistakable way

Infinitely large, too

As infinite as the universe itself?

Spiritual enlightenment

Is when we suddenly realize

That we're staring at the wonder
Of the Grand Canyon
Each and every moment
Of each and every day.



Is Al Franken a Yogi?

Some modern self-help methods have given happiness seeking a bad name. I'm reminded of Al Franken's hilarious spoofs on positive thinking on Saturday Night Live (looking at himself in the mirror saying, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and, doggone it, people like me".)

"Positive thinking" is a somewhat tricky issue for Yoga philosophy. Yoga is based on determinedly seeing things as they really are—"pure awareness" and all that. But the simple truth of the universe, according to Yoga, is so wondrous that Yoga philosophy can look like a massive dose of "positive thinking" to the casual observer.

Most positive thinking is actually seeing truth that's hidden, or it is just creative imagining. Those kinds of positive thinking are completely in sync with Yoga. On the other hand, any "positive thinking" that is a distortion of reality is counter to Yoga and unhealthy.

As an example, I might improve my tennis game by imagining I'm Roger Federer. (Imagination is not untruth!) But I'm in deep trouble if I start thinking I really am Roger Federer.

Simply put, the truth is pure Yoga. Any kind of self-deception is the antithesis of Yoga.

I would define "self-deception" as simply anything you believe that is, in reality, untrue, particularly things you believe about yourself. A simple example—"I'm not good enough to write this essay", or, more seriously, "I'm not

worthy of being loved”. In self-deception like this, positively thinking yourself out of these falsehoods is simply recognizing the truth, and good for you.

On the other hand, positively thinking you can jump off a tall building and fly is definitely not good for you. Most examples are not so easy, of course. But figuring out which are which goes to the heart of mental and Yogic health.

Getting back to Al Franken, the truth is that he probably is good enough. He probably really is smart enough. And doggone it, people probably really do like him. So I think his positive thinking, while hilarious, is both healthy and Yogic!

(Postscript—It may be too fine a point for a tongue-in-cheek piece, but a truly Yogic Al Franken would not be looking into a mirror and trying to convince himself that he’s good enough, etc. He would be meditating and simply RECOGNIZE these things about himself through heightened awareness. And, of course, ironically he wouldn’t care anymore because he would have achieved a state of egoless bliss!)



Silence is the Roar of the Universe

Silence is the Roar of the Universe.

Emptiness is the Fullness of the Grand Canyon.

Nothingness is Always Abundance.

Boredom is Always an Invitation to Amazement.

Silence is the Roar of the Universe.

Your Next Masterpiece

What is it like to see the world
Through the eyes of a famous painter?
Suppose you are Monet or Van Gogh
Or Rembrandt or Picasso.

For the next fifteen minutes
Look at every scene passing in front of your eyes
As the frame for your next masterpiece.
Can you see twenty-five different paintings
In the same simple country haystack?

Look at the rich array of details that emerge
From scenes you didn't even notice before.

How vivid do the colors become
Or even the countless colorless subtle shades of grey

When you need to match them to your palette?

How infinitely fascinating is any scene

When you need to interpret

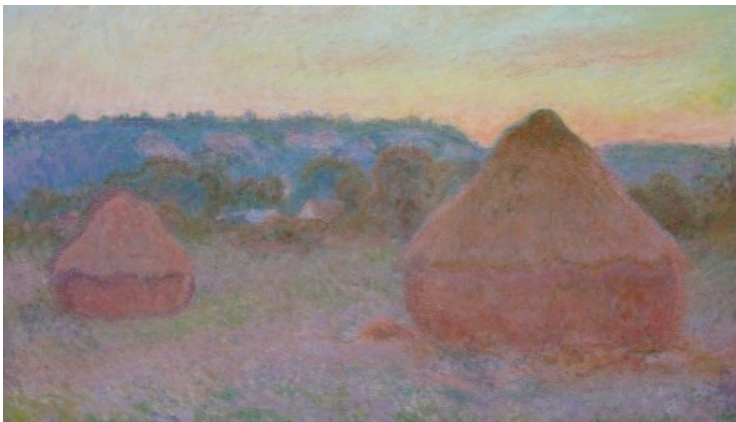
Every line and shape and texture and nuance

With your charcoal or brush?

How convincingly does this reflect

The startling infinite fascinating wonder

Of the workaday universe itself?



Enlightenment in a Snow Shovel

You have probably heard the Buddhist quotation, “Before enlightenment I carry water and sweep the floor. After enlightenment I carry water and sweep the floor.”

For me it’s shoveling snow. I used to hate shoveling snow. The new Yoga me loves shoveling snow, is ecstatic shoveling snow.

I love the feel of bundling up and putting on my Norwegian ski cap. I notice all the little details, like the snowflake pattern on the cap. I love the bracing cold that hits my face as I step outside onto the driveway. I love the feel of the shovel in my hands as I pick it off the rack in the garage. I relish the Currier and Ives winter scene before me.

I enjoy the distinctive sound of the shovel as it scrapes across the pavement. I love the way the snow parts on either side of the shovel. I think about each individual snowflake and each individual atom making up each snowflake.

I marvel at the complexity of the movements of my body as it effortlessly and unthinkingly walks and turns and bends and throws and lifts. I feel the blood quickening through my arteries as it rushes to supply my muscles with fuel.

I feel the satisfaction of accomplishment as I clear more and more of the driveway. I finally go to where the driveway meets the street and happily do the much harder work of lifting the thicker, wetter, icier snow that accumulates there.

I love the powerful presence of the City snow truck as it plows by and dumps a foot of snow from the street back onto the end of my driveway – WAIT A MINUTE. There are limits to this Yoga stuff. I really don't like that!



Can Yogis Be Jealous?

Can Yogis be jealous?

A fellow blogger asked me recently.

I replied:

Sure, yogis can be jealous.

But then we step outside ourselves

And view our jealousy with pure awareness

Without judgment

and without ego.

At that point

We become blissfully purely aware that

We also want to strangle the other person.

Like Waves or Ocean?

It's true

We are like waves in the ocean

We are more truly the ocean than the wave.

But what if there were a wave that lasted 70 years

And was conscious and could interact with other waves

And could sing and dance and create new waves

Before ultimately merging back into the infinite ocean?

We would be in awe of those waves

We would flock to see those waves

We would rejoice in their very existence

And our ability to perceive them

Until they eventually returned

To their true eternal ocean selves.

Living Upside Down

When I was in my mid-thirties I wanted to be a “Renaissance Man”, meaning I wanted to be really good at a lot of different things. Like any self-respecting Renaissance Man, I felt I should draw and paint, things I hadn’t done much up until then. My art career never got very far, but I acquired some important insights in the process.

To learn how to draw, I studied a book called, *Drawing On the Right Side of the Brain*, by Betty Edwards. It’s an excellent tutorial on drawing, to be sure. But even more it’s a book about seeing.

The main premise of the book is that to learn to draw and be more creative, we need to overcome our old habits of seeing, analyzing, and judging with a new and unfamiliar skill—the ability to see everything with objective, non-judgmental eyes. Only then can one learn how to draw accurately.

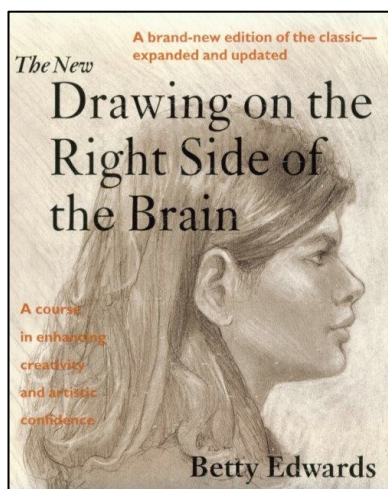
I remember a key exercise early in the book which was designed to jolt the reader into understanding this pivotal idea. The author tells us to copy a somewhat detailed line drawing of an old woman. As you can imagine, as a neophyte artist, my results were nothing like the original.

Then the author tells us to turn the same drawing upside down, and copy it again. I copy the upside down lines as best I can, and it doesn’t look like much. But when I turn it right side up it’s a pretty close approximation of the original drawing!

Edwards explains that copying the drawing upside down forces us to use the right side of the brain instead of the left. The right side is experiential and intuitive, whereas the left is analytical and judgmental. We need both, but seeing the world objectively relies on suspending analysis and judgment and just seeing what's actually there.

I think this is exactly what we try to achieve on a larger scale with our practice of Yoga. We suspend our ego, our judgments, our preconceived notions, our accumulated life filters, and our dysfunctions to see the world in all its wondrous glory.

Eventually, just as in the case of the drawing, we turn the picture right side up again. But now we can see even our ego, judgments, preconceived notions, filters, and dysfunctions with some objectivity and clarity, and our whole spiritual world is transformed forever.



What is “That” and Why am I “That”?

MONTE

I read in the ancient Yoga texts “I am That”.

I know what “I” am.

But what is “That”

And why am I “That”?

BOB

Are you sure you know who you are?

You only know who you are

When you know what “That” is

Because “I am That”

Is the meaning of Yoga.

MONTE

Now I’m even more confused.

How can I understand “I am That”?

BOB

Suppose a meteor hit the earth tomorrow

And destroyed all humanity

As once happened to the dinosaurs.

What would it say about Yoga?

What would it say about our most cherished beliefs?

MONTE

It would be the end of belief

And make a mockery of Yoga

Because the sages say we are immortal.

BOB

If a meteor struck the earth

And destroyed all humanity

Our essential Selves would remain unchanged

Because we are one with the universe.

We can identify as much with the meteor

As with our physical selves.

We can identify with the vast expanse of space

From which the meteor emerged

And with the supreme undivided cosmic consciousness

Which caused it to hurtle toward earth.

We ARE the infinite unknowable life-force of the universe

And we continue on as part of

“That” unfathomable divine consciousness

Even if all our bodies perish.

MONTE

I AM “That”!

BOB

“That” is ALL.

Soulmates

Science and Yoga

Are soulmates.

Both find

Infinite wonder

Awesome mystery

And unanswerable questions

Even in the simplest things

We see all around us.

How do the

Molecules and atoms

Protons, electrons, and quarks

Of a rock

Know how to be

A rock?

Science and Yoga
Both inflame our awareness
As much by marveling
At what we don't know
As what we do.



Different Yoga Strokes for Different Yoga Folks

Did you know the ancient Yoga sages realized that different people would need different types of Yoga to match their personality types? These paths match modern personality theory pretty closely:

People who are primarily *analytical* in nature, like myself, might feel most comfortable with *Jnana Yoga*, or the *Path of the Intellect*. We like to think and philosophize about Yoga.

People who are primarily *people oriented* might be most attracted to *Karma Yoga*, or the *Path of Selfless Giving and Compassion*.

People who are highly *emotional* in nature might prefer *Bhakti Yoga*, or the *Path of Love and Devotion*, which emphasizes love, sacred chanting, mantras, and devotional kirtan music.

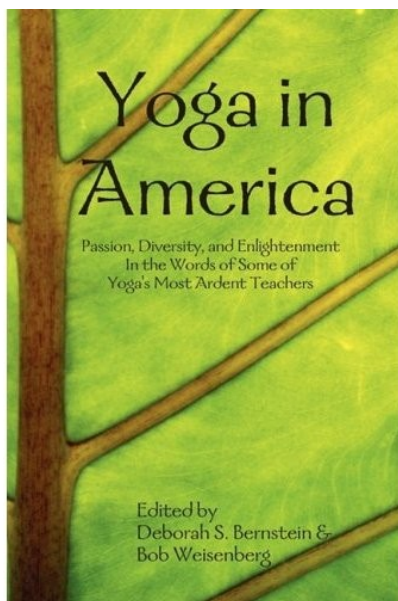
Finally, people who are what psychologists call “*drivers*” will tend towards *Raja Yoga*, or the *Path of Discipline*, as exemplified by the formal progressive attainment levels of Ashtanga.

(None of this is meant to pigeonhole people. We all have aspects of all these types within us. But most people have what psychologists call a “dominant style.”)

I was surprised by this almost exact match. I had taught personality types for years as part of my leadership workshops. I always thought of it as something very modern.

WRONG! The ancient Yoga guys had it figured out thousands of years ago.

I became much more aware of these different types of Yoga through the wonderful experience of editing [Yoga in America—Passion, Diversity, and Enlightenment](#), in which there are many vivid examples of all of them.



Compassion ate Yogis

Woke up this morning, a little sleepy. Logged in to YJ Community the way I always do. The first thing that hit my eye was:

“Compassion ate Yogis”

which sounded like a terrible tragedy until I realized that the system had incorrectly split up the word “Compassionate”! (Maybe I should drink a little coffee in morning before turning on my computer.)

While showering and laughing to myself about Compassion gobbling up hapless yogis en masse, it occurred to me that karmic yogis are “consumed by Compassion”.

Now, can someone please explain to me how that’s any different logically than “Compassion ate Yogis”? Perhaps it makes sense after all!

(See why I have to write Yoga blogs? This kind of stuff just accumulates in my head and I have to get it out.)

Honey I Shrunk the Kids

Have you ever heard those interviews of astronauts right after they've returned to earth? Remember how they describe the experience of being in space—the overwhelming wonder and awe? Most of them say being in outer space made them feel close to God, even if they weren't particularly religious blasting off.

They say this even though they're looking through very small windows with a very narrow range of vision. They're cramped and uncomfortable for days on end, and they're away from their loved ones. Yet the wonder of the universe still jolts them into union with the divine.

According to Yoga philosophy, there's nothing inherently more wondrous about peering into the vastness of space than staring out your kitchen window into your backyard. In fact one could argue there's a lot more to see in your backyard than looking out at a bunch of similar looking stars, from a pure visual variety standpoint.

But in case you don't buy that your backyard is as wondrous as outer space, I urge you to see the movie, "Honey I Shrunk the Kids", in which the kids, reduced to the size of ants, try to navigate through the grass behind their house. (If you haven't seen the movie just imagine it for a moment and you'll get the idea.)

To someone practicing advanced Yoga, everything is wondrous and divine, from outer space to a paper clip, and

everything in between. We are all like astronauts all the time, always able to perceive the infinite wonder of the everyday world if we just train our minds to do so. You don't have to travel into space to enjoy the astronauts' overwhelming experience of union with the Universe.



Through the Window

In my living room
While lying on my back
On the couch,
I can gaze through the window
Past the roof of the house,
Past the bright green leaves
Of the lofty trees
Gently swaying in the breeze,
Past the endlessly changing forms
Of the brilliant white clouds
Slowly drifting by,
I can gaze through the window
Into the unfathomable infinity
Of the wondrous deep blue sky.
This is my favorite place
To read about ancient Yoga.

Yoga Cartoon, by Simpsons' Matt Groening

A yoga student is sitting in front of his guru and says, "O Swami, words of wisdom, please."

The Swami replies, "Satori..."

...Sunyat...Nirvana

...Samsara

...Dharma...Bhodi."

The student says, "Thank you, Master."

The Swami replies, "I haven't started yet. My mouth was full of taffy."

Each Moment is Like A Precious Diamond

Each moment of existence is infinitely wondrous.

What seems like an obtuse spiritual concept at first

Can, with practice and meditation

Become quite accessible.

The result can be almost hallucinatory.

Why do you think the most advanced sages

Often sound like they're on drugs?

Beneath the surface talk of chakras and energy flows

And kundalini rising and union with the divine

What's really happening

Is they have struck the mother lode

Of pure awareness

Pure awareness of the infinite wonder

In each moment of consciousness.

How wondrous would a moment be
If you only had three years instead of a lifetime?

If you had three weeks?

Three days?

Three minutes?

How infinitely precious
Does a moment of existence become
When life is scarce
Such as near the end of life
Or when you think you're near the end?

Suppose you love diamonds.
Now suppose you walk into a giant room
Filled with a vast number of diamonds
More than you can possibly absorb or comprehend.
What would happen?

Economically, diamonds would suddenly become worthless.

But what if you were able to continue
To love and appreciate the beauty of each individual diamond
Even though they are now plentiful rather than scarce?
You would be in diamond heaven.

That's what each moment of life is like
To spiritual seekers who achieve pure awareness.

Does the plentifulness of moments
Make each moment less wondrous?

No, but it dilutes our awareness
So everyday life seems commonplace.

With pure awareness
Each moment of existence

Is restored to its true glorious wonder
Like an individual diamond is precious
To the diamond lover,
In spite of the infinite abundance of diamonds.



Bob The Philosopher King

I've decided to become a Philosopher King. It seems like the right career path for me.

I made a list of plusses and minuses. On the plus side:

- I like philosophy and world affairs.
- I like to think and write.
- I like being in charge.
- I'm good with people.
- I'm already the group leader for the Yoga Journal Philosophy Group.
- My 25 years running software companies gives me a pretty good handle on the King part.

On the minus side:

- There aren't too many openings for Philosopher Kings right now.
- The competition is pretty stiff for the openings that do come up.
- It's a pretty heavy responsibility when you think about it.
- I would have to come out of retirement.
- It would take time away from my writing and music.

Given all that, perhaps the best thing for me is to focus on the philosophy part of the job for right now. That way when the next opening for Philosopher King comes up I'll be better prepared, and I can consider all my options at that time.

“God” or “Reason”—Is There Really Any Difference?

Some of the ancient Yoga sages believed in a very personal God and others believed in an impersonal God, or God as simply the life-force of the universe.

Many religious thinkers define God as *“that which is unknowable, but which drives us towards love and goodness”*.

Given this commonly accepted definition, almost everyone believes in God. In the end what matters most is that we all agree there IS some universal drive toward making the world a better place, not where that drive comes from.

The result is the same, whether one believes it comes from an unfathomable life-force or a personal divine being. Both are equally mysterious, both can legitimately be called “God”, and both lead us to love, goodness and morality.

The sages who wrote the ancient Yoga texts were themselves in disagreement about God. Their debates are evident in the three major Yoga texts, the Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga Sutra, and the Upanishads.

In the end the texts themselves allow for the entire spectrum from secularism to traditional religion. That’s one of the things that makes them so amazing and enduring.

In the time of the Yoga Sutra (about 2400 years ago) the sages couldn’t agree on whether or not there was a God, and if there

was a God, was it a personal God or an impersonal God. So Patanjali cleverly wrote the Yoga Sutra to appeal to all these sides.

Yoga was itself a comparatively rational attempt to deal with all the irrational Gods and rituals of the Indian religious culture of the time. It was quite rebellious in that it wanted to learn about consciousness from direct experience rather than the ancient Vedic hymns and priests.

The more scientifically-minded sages simply made everything they couldn't accept as reality into a metaphor and moved on accordingly. That's what they did with the entire pantheon of ancient Gods – they made them into powerful metaphors of our inner struggles.

And that's what each of us individually should do today when the texts challenge us with concepts we can't accept as literally true – turn them into powerful metaphors. The essential message will remain the same.



A Woman's Dilemma

Today my wife complained that she should have married someone who was better at fixing things.

I told her, "Well, beautiful women like you have a tough choice in life. They can go with the buff, sensitive, Yoga-type guys, like myself, or they can go for the handy, beer-bellied guys-with-tools who can fix everything. I can see how that could be a tough choice."

"I thought all this Yoga philosophy stuff was supposed to help you with your ego, Bob."

"It is," I replied. "Thanks to meditation and pure awareness, I've come to realize how truly humble I really am."

Coming to Terms with Infinite Joy



Infinity is a difficult concept

To get your brain around.

But the Yoga sages of the past

Weren't just messing around

When they talked about Yoga

Leading to “infinite joy”.

Have you ever been to Niagara Falls?

They have tunnels there

Where you can walk down behind the Falls

So close you can actually reach out

And touch the torrent.

Imagine your ordinary awareness

As a cup you are holding in your hand.

Now imagine the Falls

As the infinite joy of cosmic consciousness

And the practice of Yoga

Like holding the cup out

Under the rushing torrent.

Or imagine your ordinary awareness

As being like the air
Trapped underneath an inverted cup
At the bottom of the ocean.

Now imagine turning the cup right-side-up
So that your ordinary awareness
Merges with the universal consciousness
Of the entire ocean –
The infinite joy of pure awareness.

If you were a wave in the ocean
And someone asked you what you are
Would you answer
“I am a wave”
Or would you answer
“I am the ocean”?

THE REST IS COMMENTARY

Yoga philosophy is sublimely simple and profound.

It can all be expressed in three phrases.

At first I thought Yoga was complicated.

Then I wrote about about it

And it began to seem simple.

I started reading the ancient texts

And Yoga again seemed complicated.

But the better I knew

The Yoga Sutra, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads

The more I realized

Yoga philosophy is sublimely simple and profound.

It can all be expressed in three sentences:

LIVE YOUR LIFE WITH LOVE AND PURPOSE,
BUT DETACH EGO FROM RESULTS

FOCUS THE MIND

EXPERIENCE THE INFINITE WONDER OF UNIVERSE

As they say about the Golden Rule

All the rest is commentary.





POSTSCRIPT – YOGA TENNIS

Yoga has transformed my tennis
Like it has transformed everything else.

From the *Sutra*
I learned to focus on the ball
With single-pointed concentration
To the exclusion of all distractions.

From the *Gita*
I learned to play hard
Like Arjuna the Warrior

While detaching my ego from the results.

From the *Upanishads*

I learned cosmic exultation

That all these diverse molecules

Can do all these wondrous things together.

I no longer throw my racket

When I miss an easy shot.

I no longer stay depressed for days

After losing a tough match.

The only problem is

Today I was beaten badly

Because I was distracted

Writing this poem in my head

While I played.

About the Author



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Bob Weisenberg is a Yoga thinker and writer. He is a frequent contributor to [*Elephant Journal*](#), the Yoga Journal Community, and other sites in the Yoga blogosphere.

Bob created the popular [*Gita Talk*](#) at Elephant Journal, an online forum on the Bhagavad Gita.

Bob co-edited Debra Bernstein's [*Yoga in America—In the Words of Some of Yoga's Most Ardent Teachers*](#).

Bob's other great passion is flamenco guitar. His two CD's are available for [free listening and download](#) at his music site.