OCTAGONAL METAMORPHOSIS

MODERN HAṬHA YOGA IN TRANSITION

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Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

BhG	Bhagavad Gītā
BṛU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
BrS	Brahmasūtra
ChU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
JV	Jīvanmuktiviveka
KaU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
M	Mokṣopāya
TaiU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
VB	Vyāsabhāṣya
YV	Yogavāśiṣṭha
YS	Yogasūtra

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

> The single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue.* Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.[1] - Mikhail Bakhtin

> In the infinite language of events and situations, eternally changing, but plain to the truly attentive, transcendence speaks to our hearts at the essential moments of personal life.[2] Revelation seizes the human elements at hand and recasts them: it is the *pure shape of the meeting*.[3] – Martin Buber

> Yoga is the restraint of the fluctuations of consciousness. Then the seer [i.e. the Self] abides in its own nature.[4] – Patañjali

> Reaching the unification of mind as pure I-am-ness, the mind becomes serene and infinite like a vast ocean.[5] - Vyāsa

> Those for whom the wavering mind does not waver, not even at the thought of the void, have crossed the awful ocean of existence that is agitated by the monsters of the *kleśas* [afflictions].[6] - Nāgārjuna

The present thesis has in many ways been a painful experience. Having started out with the objective of examining the relationship between religion and identity in Hindu nationalism, having then read at least a shelf of books on that subject, as well as a large quantity of other material more or less irrelevant to the initial purpose, I realized my passions lay firmly within the fascinating world of Yoga. Indeed, at times the process that ultimately culminated in realizing my ordained task resembled more a labyrinth than scholarly edification, finding myself stuck at various points with an infinite number of side-tracks and lost in an indefinite theoretical regression (or digression?). So what saved me from disappearing altogether in a cloud-of-confusion, quite the opposite of that lucid yogic trance (*samādhi*) I had previously been studying? To be sure, it was my own willful choice, at last, to bring it all together, motivated primarily by an interest in Yoga; a resolution which nonetheless would not have been possible without all those surrounding me—tutors, family, co-students, close and distant friends alike. Neither would this work have been com-

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[1] From p. 293 in "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" (appendix 2 in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*), translated in Morson & Emerson (1990), p. 59-60.
[2] *On Judaism*, ed. N. Glatzer, 1968, p. 216.
[3] *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays,* ed. and tr. M. Friedman, 1990, p. 135.
[4] From the *Yogasūtra*, I.2-3, my translation. (Sanskrit text from Śāstrī, 1998.)
[5] Freely translated from VB I.36: *tathāsmitāyāṃ samāpannaṃ cittaṃ nistaraṅga-mahodadhi-kalpam śāntam anantam asmitāmātram bhavati.*
[6] Verse 59 from *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, ('Sixty Verses of Arguments'). Translation by C. Lindtner in *Master of Wisdom* (1997, Dharma Publishing), p. 93.

pleted without the support from and creative dialogues with those very same people. Thank you!

Why, then, the fascination? The increasing popularity of modern Yoga—one is tempted to call it a craze—is as yet not thoroughly understood. Why, all of a sudden, are people all over the world practicing yoga postures (*āsana*) and breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*)? Are they longing for divine union with Brahman, as Vedāntins would have it, or complete isolation (*kaivalya*) of awareness, most of them apparently without even knowing it, without ever having read the *Yogasūtra* and much less heard of supracognitive enstasy (*asamprajñāta samādhi*)? Behind these questions lurks another, perhaps more pressing issue: Are the "ancient" and "authentic" Yoga traditions now being transformed, adapted to a globalized world and diluted of their philosophical and historical complexity, slimmed down to fit the overstrained individual's "practice light" (*laghu-abhyāsa*), or are they kept essentially intact? Indeed, has there ever existed an "ahistorical" Yoga tradition, the divine gift from India to the rest of the world? Thinking hard and long about this, I felt the increasing urge to scrutinize the history and philosophy of one of the most popular branches of 20th century Yoga, thus hoping to shed some light on the problem, from one perspective of many possible. This was also the branch that I myself had practiced for some time, having met in Chennai (in southern India) with one of its most influential gurus T.K.V. Desikachar, eldest son of "grand guru" Krishnamacharya.

It soon came to mind that my recent interest in the Russian polymath Mikhail Bakhtin would come in handy. His explorations into the intricacies of dialogue are certainly useful for investigating also Yoga. After all, is not the human world of meaning an incessant and creative play (*līlā*) of dialogue? Are we not always part of an interaction that can never be fully reduced or finally explained, simply because there is always yet another perspective to consider, yet another viewpoint (*dṛṣti*) to take? And is this never-ending conversation not more of a chaos than a structured system, displaying incompleteness rather than teleology—a relentless quotidian straggling with various "artists" fighting for the final statement they can never boast but all too often aspire to? Then there are the claims of the Madhyamaka-Buddhist Nāgārjuna, and the somewhat later Patañjali (and his commentator Vyāsa), that all dialogues can come to rest. What are we to think of this? Of course, this is yet another reason for my interest in Yoga traditions, to be sure the most important one. Is it possible to look beyond dialogue? Is there really a place of utter silence, lying within or perhaps between our intersubjective musings? And how do we then attain it? Through knowledge (*jñāna*), as some would have it, or through action (*karma*), as others claim? Or perhaps neither, or both? What would Patañjali have said to Bakhtin, and Nāgārjuna to Buber? Maybe that all dialogues are ultimately empty (*śūnya*), that beyond the afflicted (*kleśa*) movements of consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) we all participate in lies an infinite ocean of stillness? And how would Bakhtin and Buber have replied: that only in genuine openness to the other may we find blissful creativity and divine presence? This raises further questions. Is dialogical reality a hellish *samsāra* or a true blessing of creative becoming? And should we turn towards (*pravṛtti*) or away from (*nivṛtti*) the world in our search for answers to these uncertainties?

Questions such as these became increasingly intriguing, they were the reflections that I brought with me, clearly shaping my endeavours to a great extent. I wished to

explore what Yoga might mean to different people in different times and places. What, then, can we learn about the old traditions of yoga from contemporary gurus and pundits? Can we trust them just because they say so? And so in the end it became my prime objective to study the background and dialogical nature of a variety of Yoga traditions and to converse with a selected few of them on matters such as identity, the nature of self, modernity, mystical experience and tradition. This is the result of that conversation.

1.2 AIMS AND PURPOSES

The purpose of this study is to sketch a historical and philosophical framework appropriate for critically analyzing and understanding transformations of modern Haṭha Yoga. The framework involves examining neo-Hindu and Western influences, the assessment of alternative interpretations and descriptions in a postcolonial perspective, delineating important philosophical themes and concepts (both contemporary and antecedent), and a closer look at differences between and within various Yoga traditions. One important issue is that of *identity*, both on the level of the tradition or school (how is the tradition portrayed or defined by leading figures? what is regarded as being within the scope of tradition?) and on the level of the individual (what happens with the person through yoga practice? how is the nature of the self defined?). A large part of this framework will be devoted to investigating the applicability of a so-called dialogical analysis by using examples from various Yoga traditions and texts.

The following questions will be dealt with, among others: What is the historical and philosophical background to modern Yoga? How are we to understand possible influences of modernity and Western culture? What changes or discontinuities may be present in modern Yoga compared to historical phenomena? What texts are considered important or seminal, and how have interpretations of these changed? What role does the notion of 'mystical experience' play in modern Yoga? In what ways do typically religious dimensions affect the theory and practices of modern Yoga?

I will use the term 'modern Haṭha Yoga' to refer to contemporary Yoga traditions, primarily developed during the twentieth century, that typically emphasize the practice of *āsana* (body positions) and *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), even if they occasionally integrate meditative training within this framework of practices. Being 'modern' they relate in one way or another to neo-Hinduism and Western thought. Frequently they are also more or less hybrid and syncretistic forms, incorporating practices and doctrinal elements from a variety of sources.[7] Even though modern Yoga in general does not seem to be a complete reorientation, as some claim, this is not to say that some interpretations and versions may in fact be of a predominantly more modern origin. Here we must tread cautiously, however, because often certain aspects or attitudes are ascribed to schools or orientations as a whole, whereas they are in fact only the result of popular (often media) conceptions, or exclusively

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[7] In a sense they overlap considerably with classical or Rāja Yoga, at least doctrinally, typically claiming both the *Yogasūtra* and the *Haṭhayogapradīpika* as a theoretical and practical foundation. The Krishnamacarya traditions could certainly be called 'modern Rāja Yoga', thus acknowledging the elevated status of the *Yogasūtra*. In other words, there are considerable similarities between what might be called neo-classical Yoga, modern Haṭha Yoga, and modern Rāja Yoga.

displayed by novice Western practitioners, not necessarily by those that head the tradition or initially created it.[8]

I will outline an analytical framework which is intended to reveal complexities and dialogical potentials of modern Haṭha Yoga. This framework will in part be conceptualized in terms of a set of 'tension-fields', as dialogical patterns running through many of the more important themes dealt with throughout the history of yoga. To analyze transformations requires some understanding both of the past as well as the present. Moreover, in the modern world this also involves infinitely complex spatial disseminations and cross influencing, as well as obscure (or simply ambiguous?) events such as "glocalization", "hybridization" and "translocal communities of practice". Such an attempt therefore demands awareness of the complexities involved in comparing phenomena across distant times and spaces, especially when dealing with such problematic issues as the colonial past and post/neocolonial present, the East-West encounter, the possibility of understanding and perhaps even explaining other cultural perspectives, and so on. Therefore this study will be devoted to investigating a dialogical model of analysis that self-reflexively deals with comparison and which focuses on social interaction. This is in essence an attempt to theorize a reciprocal relationship between individual action and social structures. The dialogical model of analysis is developed specifically for dealing with modern Haṭha Yoga and is heavily indebted to the work of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin.

I will variously address historical traditions and texts, modern Yoga in general and modern Haṭha Yoga in particular. To research modern Haṭha Yoga I believe it is necessary to have some idea of its historical background, as well as how other modern Yoga traditions position themselves vis-à-vis this background. The present study is thus in many ways a preliminary one and should be seen as a "work in progress". It is primarily intended as a tentative presentation of a critical framework for further research of modern Haṭha Yoga. I thus intend to expand on several areas in the future, such as a more in-depth analysis of the Krishnamacharya branch of modern Haṭha Yoga. I also hope to supplement with field research.

1.3   INTERPRETATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

The title "octagonal metamorphosis" alludes to a systematization of Yoga practice as presented in that most revered of texts, the *Yogasūtra* (ca. second century CE). In this system transformation of the individual—metamorphosis from a fragmented mental state to complete liberation—is seen as consisting of eight parts (*aṣṭāṅga*). These components or elements may variously be interpreted as spokes on a ladder, as parallel developmental lines, or as connected in a wheel- or spiral formed, and then perhaps also endless, process of maturation. The title indicates the importance of *Yogasūtra* as a means of identifying tradition and ascertaining the discursive boundaries for many modern schools of Haṭha Yoga. Indeed, the eightfold system of Yoga (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) has acquired a prominent and highly influential position within

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[8] For example, the bodily idiom *as manifested by predominantly Western practitioners* of modern haṭha yoga may be heavily influenced by typically modern phenomena such as fitness culture, the "global gym", and other similar trends. See Thomas Johansson's (1999) work on modern images of the body. Also compare Joseph Alter's (1994a, 1994b, 1993, 1992) work on Indian wrestling in postcolonial India.

modern traditions, despite it being only one of many alternative systems presented in the history of Yoga. However, the interpretations of this system have also changed throughout this history. Interpretations of the *Yogasūtra* is thus one important area to look into, although we should also investigate the influence of other important texts.

Other ingredients of an analysis is to problematize various interpretations of the history of Yoga as presented by modern Yoga traditions, and to examine connections between modern Haṭha Yoga and what has been called the Hindu Renaissance or neo-Hinduism. When applicable, I will focus on the tradition of Krishnamacharya, which includes three of the most popular and widespread schools of modern Haṭha Yoga, and examine its relation to classical Yoga and other earlier traditions of Hindu Yoga.

There can be no doubt that encountering the West, colonially or culturally speaking, has had enormous consequences for the transformation of Haṭha Yoga in modern times. My intention, however, is to avoid succumbing to viewing modern Haṭha Yoga as being diluted, a Western 'adjustment' or neo-Hindu legacy as it were, and instead investigate in the atmosphere of dialogue. This is because I believe that a complete rejection or delegitimation is unfruitful to research and more belongs to rhetorical statements. Consequently, one of the primary objects of this study will be to discern variant interpretations without also judging them as distortions, thus considering possible neo-Hindu reinterpretations originally initiated by a colonial set of problems but in many ways still present in various forms. My interest therefore lies in trying to understand and analyze changes, uncover reinterpretations and discern internal differences within the broad phenomenon of Yoga, and Haṭha Yoga in particular. This is not caused by conservative or nostalgic inclinations, nor by an obsession for the accurate or the orthodox. Indeed, I see no intrinsic fault in change or development but am rather favorably disposed towards many of the refashionings and hybrids that have arisen during the last century or so, often as a result of more numerous and increasingly deeper contacts between cultures and localities. On the other hand, I believe that an awareness of the choices that have been made by modern Yoga traditions enables us to more clearly see the alternatives and therefore not be lead in a direction that we do not in fact wish to go. Frequently we encounter examples of romantic idealizations of everything "eastern" or "oriental", even more so when dealing with religious and mystic traditions. At best these images are only the expression of a compulsive simplification, to make life a little bit easier and perhaps also a bit more fun. At worst, however, it entails an exploitation or distortion that veils not only the true but also the truly creative. Behind the stereotype hides genuine multiplicity, a polyphonic world of incompatibilities, contrasts and perpetual transformation. Therefore this study may be seen as an attempt to *dialogize monologization* (to borrow from Bakhtin). It is theorizing in a spirit of dialogue, thus intensifying complexity rather than reducing it, increasing the potentials of interpretation rather than aiming at straightforward explanations.

Reinterpretations may of course be more or less accurate in their description or reporting of other interpretations or phenomena. As such they can also be *corrected*. A legitimate aim of research is thus to test an account for its accuracy. But there are also other important aims, perhaps even more important, of *entering* dialogue, *releasing* dialogue, and even *displaying* dialogue. In developing a dialogical model of analysis,

I hope to engage in a type of research that not only searches for errors and misrepresentations but also enables a constructive discussion.

A dialogical analysis studies historical changes and developments not by delegitimating them but by acknowledging the differences as creative repositionings. It views history as a continuous dialogue on various themes, avoiding to compare them to 'actual' phenomena, and self-reflexively relates to these themes. In any case, we should be wary of regarding history as a series of disconnected events. Consequently, the guiding metaphor of this study is that of a living conversation. It views meaning as situated "here and now", developed through the living contours of dialogue. The problem with monologic ideologies is not their interpretations and contributions *per se* but their universalistic claims, claims that tend to "suppress the fact that they derive from a particular community with a particular agenda at a particular time in a particular cultural space" (King 1999b: 69). A dialogical analysis attempts to avoid this impasse by highlighting self-reflexivity and the interpretational flexibility of approaching history.

I contend that it is possible to see various Yoga traditions as taking different positions on key concepts and discourses, such as how to view the relation between knowledge, cessation and liberation. We are better off if we pay attention to the ways that modern Yoga traditions approach these "internally dialogized microworlds", how these traditions position themselves in a field of tensions, than if we presuppose that there is a fundamental unity which we may then compare deviant interpretations to.

1.4 ARRANGEMENT

First I will present a chronology of Yoga in chapter 2. This is intended to form a historical background to further analysis. Introducing important conceptual differences and central controversies is part of the aspiration to uncover the complexity and wealth of interpretational nuances that constitute the background to modern Yoga. I do not attempt a neutral or objective account of the history of Yoga, which would certainly be antithetical to a dialogical framework. On the contrary, the historical background is intended to problematize simplistic and monologic descriptions of Yoga, and serves precisely to reveal the many elements (texts, discourses, themes, interpretations) that must be part of any endeavor to understand modern Yoga. The chapter ends with a presentation of how Haṭha Yoga was initially created within the fold of Tantric Hinduism, ca. ninth century CE, and of the rise of modern Yoga, including a more detailed presentation of the two most popular branches of contemporary Yoga, the Krishnamacharya and Shivananda traditions.

Chapter 3 starts with a condensed presentation of Bakhtin's dialogism, which forms the backbone of my dialogical model. I then introduce issues regarding approaches to religion in general and to Yoga in particular. This presentation serves to tentatively outline a dialogical approach, presented as an attempt to balance social and individual aspects of religio-mystical phenomena, and to "dialogize" or enhance complexity of interpretation.

In chapter 4 these issues will be expanded upon, particularly focusing on the subjects of tradition, identity and the modern predicament. This involves how to dialogically approach the systematization of tradition; how religio-mystical traditions may deal with the boundaries of tradition; and how interpretations of Yoga

may have changed due to modernity, i.e. what is "modern" about modern Yoga? The discussions in this chapter will variously address religious phenomena in general, on a more abstract theoretical level, as well as more narrowly focus on Yoga traditions.

Chapter 5 cursorily discusses the nature of mystical experience, in an attempt to outline a dialogically based framework to the religio-mystical experiential dimensions of Yoga. This involves an examination of conceptions of mysticism and mystical experience, of different notions of selfhood, and of the tensions between theory and practice in classical Yoga.

Throughout, examples will be inserted to enable a tentative evaluation of the dialogical approach—its appropriateness for this context and for the specific purposes—as well as lay the foundations for further research.

2 HISTORY OF YOGA

2.1 VEDIC ORIGINS

The roots of Hindu yoga traditions extend far back in the past. Feuerstein (1998: 35) claims that already in the *Ṛg-veda* we encounter so-called proto-yogic forms, a form of disciplined introspection or meditative focusing (*dhyāna*) in conjunction with sacrificial rituals. This proto-Yoga can be seen as an early form of sacrificial mysticism,[9] containing many elements characteristic of later Yoga, such as concentration techniques, ascetic forms of practice (*tapas*), breath-control practiced in conjunction with recitation, the notion of self-sacrifice, and mystical experience (Whicher 1998: 11-12).[10] According to Jan Gonda, *dhyāna* can be seen as an extension and reinterpretation of the quality of 'vision' (*dhī*) that characterized the Vedic seers (*ṛśis*). This notion of vision, he claims, is the foundation for a greater part of Indian religious theory and practice. Indeed, developing of the ability not simply to infer but to experience transcendent reality directly is a key soteriological theme in the role of meditation and, by extension, philosophical theory in many Indian religious contexts.[11] In any case, it is often claimed by modern Yoga traditions that they trace their origins more or less directly to the Vedic seers.

However, whether the renunciate traditions, from which yogic traditions may be said to have originated, developed fully within the Vedic fold or not is a contentious issue. There are references in the Vedic corpus to figures that seem to have been standing outside the Brahmanical, Vedic community. The so-called Keśins are described in a much-debated hymn of the *Ṛg-veda*—one of the earliest recorded descriptions of an ecstatic religious experience—as longhaired ascetics who have ecstatic experiences and the ability to read minds.[12] They strongly resemble later Hindu ascetics, apparently representing a strand of asceticism which existed outside Vedic ritual culture and which probably was an important influence on later renouncer traditions (Werner 1989; Flood 1996: 77-8). The *Atharva Veda Saṃhitā* attests to the existence of a community of warrior-like ascetics called Vrātyas, who lived on the edges of Aryan society and may have been connected with the Keśins. They practiced their own ceremonies and used chants which included reference to an early form of breath control, later developed as *prāṇāyāma* in yogic traditions. They demonstrate a close connection, found in later traditions, between asceticism and martialism—a connection which is also shown in that ascetic ideologies and practices emerged within the ruling or warrior classes of Indian society (Flood 1996: 79).

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[9] This expression was used by S.N. Dasgupta in his *Hindu Mysticism* (1927), though likely coined somewhat earlier.

[10] Feuerstein (1998: 124-7) further argues that the proto-Yoga of the Vedas has shamanic precursors, such as shamanic initiation, ecstatic journeys, "mastery of five", etc. Cf. Sarbacker (2001) and Eliade (1990) for other accounts on the distinction between shamanism and Yoga. Sarbacker argues that they cluster around different dimensions (numinous/cessative) situated on the same continuum, whereas Eliade and Feuerstein maintain that the distinction is qualitative and in many respects also chronological.

[11] From Gonda's *Vision of the Vedic Poets* (1963), referred to in Sarbacker (2001: 19-20).

[12] It is a matter of controversy whether the experiences of these ecstatics were drug-induced or not, depending upon how one interprets the word '*viṣa*' in the relevant hymns. See Flood (1996: 77-8).

The groups of ascetics standing outside the Brahmanical religion, thus rejecting the Veda as revelation, were known as *śramaṇa*s, 'strivers' seeking liberation through efforts of austerity or meditation. These were the groups from which Buddhism and Jainism later would develop.[13] Flood (1996: 77) argues that even though there are continuities between renunciation and Vedic Brahmanism, elements from non-Brahmanical, Śramaṇic traditions did play an important part. By the sixth or fifth century BCE, renunciate traditions had apparently developed both within the bounds of Vedic tradition and outside those boundaries. These traditions expounded upon the idea of renunciation of action as a path to spiritual emancipation, which was achieved through asceticism (*tapas*) and meditation, believing that action leads to rebirth and suffering. They offered a new vision of the human condition, later incorporated to some degree into the worldview of the Brahman householder (Flood 1996: 75). These groups indicate that there were important developments outside or on the edge of Vedic society, and Yoga would to a large extent arise among these.

Even if it is arguable that the Vedic seers were in direct line of what later became Yoga, Werner (1980: 201) contends that there nevertheless is considerable evidence of mystical insights in the Vedas. Rawlinson (1978) critiques the view that the Vedas are basically mystical texts based on Yoga, not least because the picture is very fragmentary. On the one hand, the evolutionary hypothesis, which purports that Yoga started as a primitive shamanistic practice later developed and refined, is a heavy-handed imposition. On the other hand, the "no-development-only-restatement" thesis is monolithic and inflexible. Indeed, a simpler interpretation is to assert that "the Veda is the record of people of very different insights" (p. 270).

In any case, it is surely difficult to declare anything conclusively about what the seers (*ṛṣi*) of the Vedas actually experienced without also resorting to anachronistic readings: "It is unclear how one can know what, if anything, those seers experienced; and if they did experience something, whether they all experienced the same thing, and whether that is essentially the same as what later came to be called *samādhi* within classical Yoga" (Olivelle 2001: 679). It is simply not possible to reach any definite conclusions about their historical import and significance. Almond (1982: 29-30) also cautions us to be careful in imposing a belief in there being a description of mystical experience in texts which do not indicate an explicit relationship between the text and preternatural experience upon which it is supposedly based. Consequently, "where no explicit reference is made, greater caution in exegesis is necessary" (p. 30). Moreover, exegesis of mystical texts "is itself dependent upon presuppositions as to the relationship of mystical experience and its interpretation" (p. 152).

In general, modern Yoga traditions typically claim some connection to the Vedic seers. This may perhaps be seen as part of a search for identity, an attempt to anchor Yoga in absolute origins and supplying the history of Yoga with an aura of timelessness. An analysis of modern Haṭha Yoga traditions should include an inquiry of how

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[13] Referring to the work of Richard Gombrich and Paul Wheatly, Flood (1996: 80-1) points out that the renunciate traditions largely developed in the context of an increasing urbanization and invidualism. The move from an agrarian to an urban situation provided a context in which individualism could develop in some segments of the community, accompanied by a weakening of traditional, ritualized behaviour patterns. Moreover, emerging commercial classes were often interested in new ideas, and with improved communication these could then more easily be disseminated, particularly by wandering ascetics.

they refer to the origins of Yoga, what role this may play in 'authenticating' teachings, and how such a process may add to a sense of identity and continuity.

2.2 YOGA IN THE UPANIṢADS AND THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Whatever their origin, the idea-complexes of renunciation and meditation were increasingly systematized in the Upaniṣads. In these texts the Śramaṇic renunciate traditions were incorporated within the Vedic tradition, established through a reinterpretation of Vedic ritual processes. Ritual action was now largely subordinated to knowledge attained by asceticism and yogic disciplines. The Upaniṣads thus internalized the ritualistic norms of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, "establishing the path of intense thought, reflection, and meditation as the 'inner sacrifice'" (Whicher 1998: 13). Sarbacker (2001: 156-7, 164-9) argues that when Śramaṇic practices moved from being peripheral in nature towards being a central religious tradition—thus replacing virtuoso practice with scholasticism—this resulted in scholastic interpretations of meditation systems and attempts to reconcile varied interpretations, both within Buddhism and Hinduism. This transformation could also have changed the soteriological visions, as well as transformed the relation between developing special powers of action and perception, on the one hand, and the strive for detachment and release on the other. The scholastic and ritual dimensions thus emerged in the process of integrating views into a larger system, recognizing both the need to reach out to a larger society and to develop systems of authority that were based on firmer ground.[14]

Even though the earliest Upaniṣads emphasized the need for renunciation (saṃnyāsa) and intensive meditation (dhyāna) they reveal very few instructions about actual practices. In any case, the early Upaniṣads Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya include elements that were later to become important in the context of classical Yoga, such as practice (abhyāsa) being coupled with the need for dispassion (vairāgya) (Whicher 1998: 17). The first technical references to Yoga are however found only later, in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. This Upaniṣad has an important position in Hindu traditions, particularly because its teachings were later to be elaborated upon in Vedānta. Among other things, it delineates the method of discrimination between the Self and the not-Self through an inquiry into the so-called fivefold sheath (kośa-pañcaka-viveka)—enumerated as being food (annamaya), vitality (prāṇamaya), mind (manomaya), intellect (vijñānamaya) and bliss (ānandamaya).[15] In Deussen's words, the

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[14] His argument of peripheral and central cults draws on the work of anthropologist I.M. Lewis, especially *Ecstatic Religion* (1989 [1971]). For criticism of Lewis, see D. Gellner ("Priests, Healers, Mediums and Witches" in *Man,* New Series, 1994, 29: 1, pp. 27-48), L. Giles ("Posession Cults on the Swahili coast" in *Africa,* 1987, 57:2, pp. 234-258) and J. Atkinson ("Shamanisms Today" in *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 1992, 21, pp. 307-330). To my mind, the idea that there exists a continuum between meditative practice and scholastic (re)interpretation, which is connected to the idea of a "routinization" when going mainstream, does not stand or fall with Lewis's interpretations. However, one problem in Sarbacker's account is that he does not articulate more precisely what he means by "ritual", and in which way it relates to, or differs from, speculation and doctrine. Perhaps incorporating material from Tambiah and others on the notion of ritual would shed some interesting light on this issue. In any case, we may perhaps use the idea-complexes of innovation/routinization and avant-garde/mainstream, but divorce them from the specific interpretations of Lewis.

[15] See Balasubramaniam (1984), especially p. 21. The theory of five sheaths is first presented in a rudimentary form in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.1-5), though the term *kośa* is not used there nor in

theory illustrates the idea that layers surround our inner Self, "durch welche wir durchzudringen haben, um zum Innersten unserer Natur und damit zu Brahman zu gelangen" (1920: 148).[16] The theory of five sheaths would also play an important part in the Vedāntization of modern Yoga traditions.

Verse 2.7 of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is the classic, original account that describes bliss (*ānanda*) as primary attribute of Brahman, a notion that was canonized in later Vedānta as "truth-consciousness-bliss" (*saccidānanda*).[17] It was indeed to become "one of the most common terms in the religious vocabulary of the Brāhmaṇical/Hindu traditions" (Olivelle 1997: 153). Olivelle (1997) asserts that it is primarily the influence of *Brahmasūtra* on later theological discourse that made *ānanda* so important. He establishes a direct connection between *Brahmasūtra* and the Yajurvedic Upaniṣads of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Taittirīya*, where the association of *ānanda* with brahman/ātman is formed specifically as an extension of the meaning of orgasmic rapture. This connection with sexual aspects is made explicit in BṛU 4.1.6, where the loss of consciousness of individual identity is associated with orgasm (p. 172). Historically *ānanda* had a range of meanings, "consonant with the range of conditions under which a person experiences joy or pleasure" (p. 154), used in a variety of contexts in early Vedic literature, including the joy of drinking, the thrill of gambling and sexual pleasure. Remarkably enough, it is thus only the theological vocabulary of the Yajurvedic Upaniṣads that formed the basis of its later use in Vedāntic discourse. The highly technical usage of *ānanda* in TaiU and BṛU seems in fact to have been confined to a rather narrow circle.[18] In any case, the term itself, accompanied by the theory of five sheaths, is often utilized in modern Yoga (see e.g. Kraftsow 2002) though, on the face of it, not entirely compatible with how it is used in the *Yogasūtra*.

It is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* that marks "a definite transition between the esoteric, monistic trends of proto-Yoga as expressed in the early Upaniṣads and preclassical forms of Yoga as illustrated in later Upaniṣadic works such as the *Śvetāśvatara* and *Maitrāyaṇīya* as well as the famous epic, the *Mahābhārata*" (Whicher 1998: 19). The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (ca. fifth century BCE) is the first to deal more explicitly with Yoga. It also entails a clear definition of Yoga: "the steady holding of the senses".[19] Spiritual

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Śaṅkara's commentary. In fact, according to Deussen (1920: 148) the theory is not as important with Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara as it was to become with later Vedāntic texts, such as the *Vedāntasāra* by Sadānanda and *Pañcadaśī* (especially I.32-41) by Vidyāraṇya. It is extensively treated by Śaṅkara's disciple Sureśvara in his *Tattirīyopaniṣad Bhāṣya-Vārtika*, see Balasubramaniam (1984: 390- 460, ślokas 235-359).

[16] According to Sureśvara, the sheaths on the level of the individual are modifications of their respective counterparts at the cosmic level (Balasubramaniam 1984: 390-1, śloka 235). Balasubramaniam (1984: 45) claims that Śaṅkara's final view (*siddhānta*) is that *ānandamaya* cannot be the highest Brahman but only the conditioned self. Śaṅkara thus rejects the *prima facie* view of the opponent (*Vṛttikāra*) that *ānandamaya* must be identical to Brahman (see BrS 1.1.12-19). Cf. Deussen (1920: 149-150), who maintains that both Śaṅkara and Bādarāyaṇa take Brahman to be *ānandamaya* (this also entails that Śaṅkara contradicts himself, which I find unlikely).

[17] Also compare van Buitenen (1979).

[18] We may for example witness parallel semantic developments where *ānanda* denoted simple joy or happiness in Buddhist and epic texts. The Buddhist term for the liberated state is *sukha*, whereas *ānanda* is used for 'normal joy' (Olivelle 1997: 170-3).

[19] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II.3.10): *yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha, buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim*. (II.3.11): *tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām, apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau*. In Radhakrishnan's translation: (10) "When the five (senses) knowledges together

emancipation depends upon grace, and Yoga is seen only as a precondition for the reception of grace, because "the Self is attained only by the one whom it chooses".[20] According to Whicher (1998: 18-9) this Upaniṣad constitutes a breakthrough in Hindu Yoga, incorporating many fundamental ideas underlying later yogic theory and practice. Despite the lack of systematization it nevertheless helped mould together crucial building blocks and central philosophical ideas, contributing to the process of Yoga becoming a recognizable tradition. Feuerstein (1998: 180) even calls *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara* "early Yoga Upaniṣads" to indicate their close proximity to later yoga texts. He calls the doctrine propounded in them as that of *adhyātma-yoga*, "Yoga of the deep Self" (p. 181).

In the later *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (ca. third century BCE) devotion (*bhakti*) is seen as an integral component of yogic practice. This text also recommends the recitation of the sacred sound Om (called *praṇava*). In Feuerstein's (1998: 183-4) interpretation, it espouses a form of panentheistic Yoga, perhaps typical of the epic age. In *Maitrāyanīya Upaniṣad* (ca. second century BCE) we encounter a more formalized portrayal of Yoga practice, presented in the form of a foundational series of six practices (*ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*), of which five are identical with Patañjali's last limbs (*prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhyāna, dhāraṇā* and *samādhi*). It also includes the first physiological theories of Yoga (Feuerstein 1998: 276-7; Whicher 1998: 20-1).

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* the term 'yoga' is used more or less synonymically to a 'path' (*mārga*) or style of spirituality, and should not be confused with a more narrow meaning, i.e. the practices or beliefs of classical and/or Haṭha Yoga (which emphasize meditation, postures, breath control and the stillness of mind). The *Bhagavad Gītā* nevertheless attained great status as one of the central teachings on Yoga in modern Hinduism, especially as interpreted by Swami Vivekananda at the turn of the 20th century. This text recommends an approach to spiritual liberation that incorporates selfless action (*naiṣkarmya-karma*) and attainment of wisdom (*jñāna*) with devotion (*bhakti-yoga*). Feuerstein (1998: 253) calls this a form of "mystical activism", though it does not dispose of the world-renouncing asceticism of earlier Upaniṣadic literature. The whole path is succinctly summarized in ten stanzas at the end of the text (BhG 18.46-55): With *karma-yoga* (or simply '*yoga*') the individual disinterestedly carries out his personal duty (*svadharma*). Together with *jñāna-* or *buddhi-yoga* (also called *sāṅkhya* in the text)—i.e. reflection on the transcendental self (*ātman*) that does not act nor is affected by action—these two paths address different groups of seekers, though it is also stated that *karma-yoga* is the surest one. Together they lay the foundation for *dhyāna-yoga*, the practice of meditation, which is understood as sitting in reclusion, regulating the breath, and practicing one-pointed concentration, preferably devotional meditation on God. (This practice is more akin to earlier renunciate traditions of Yoga, which were systematized in the *Yogasūtra*.) Gradually

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with the mind cease (from their normal activities) and the intellect itself does not stir, that, they say, is the highest state." (11) "This, they consider to be Yoga, the steady control of the senses. Then one becomes undistracted for Yoga comes and goes" (Radhakrishnan 1953: 645). Cf. Feuerstein (1998: 183) and Whicher (1998: 19).

[20] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: (I.2.23) *nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na buhunā śrutena, yamevaiṣa vṛnute, tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛnute tanūm svām.* "This self cannot be attained by instruction, or by thought, or by much hearing. It is attained only by the one whom it chooses. To such a one the Self reveals its own nature." (Whicher 1998: 18) Cf. also Radhakrishnan (1953: 619) and Feuerstein (1998: 181).

thought will recede so that the true Self may be revealed, thus "becoming brahman" (18.53, *brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*). Having become brahman the individual is satisfied and does not grieve or yearn (18.54, *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātma na śocati na kāṅkṣati*). Indeed, *bhakti*, which was first seen only as a means to becoming brahman, is transformed into a higher form of devotion that leads the seeker from Self-realization to union with God, who is the actual foundation of brahman. This is the highest and final goal.[21]

Gansten (2002: 18-19) argues that we should see the *Bhagavad Gītā* as a synthetic text, weaving together different and sometimes opposing traditions to a diversified but well-arranged whole. In any case, the emphasis lies on practice rather than theory and it should not be taken as a systematic philosophical text.

Flood (1999: 124-5) points out that the *Gītā* has not always enjoyed the popularity it has been claimed by Hindu revival movements, although its theological importance indeed provoked a number of commentaries by famous Hindu theologians. Also, we must understand its theology on its own terms, in which devotion to the Lord and detached action for the sake of social order is central. "The text puts in narrative form the concerns of Hindu orthodoxy: the importance of *dharma* and of maintaining social stability, the importance of correct and responsible action, and the importance of devotion to the transcendent as a personal Lord" (p. 125). Flood also points out that *bhakti-yoga* as a way of salvation means that "even women and low castes can achieve liberation in this way, a statement in stark contrast to the orthodox brahmanical idea that only twice-born have access to liberation through renunciation" (p. 126). Also, the idea that a human being is dear (*priya*) to the Lord, that there is a bond of love between human and divine, here appears for the first time (p. 127). It is important to recognize these characteristic aspects of the Bhagavad Gītā, often suppressed or considerably reinterpreted by followers of modern Yoga, especially in Vedānticized forms. It is also important to distinguish the different uses of the term 'yoga', in order to be more aware of what is intended and pointed at in a particular interpretation or claim in modern Yoga traditions.

2.3 THE YOGASŪTRA

The *Yogasūtra* (YS), written or compiled some time around the second or third century, has become one of the most important texts also of modern Yoga traditions. Historically we do not know much about its author Patañjali nor about its major commentator Vyāsa (approx. 5th century).[22] Not surprising, then, that there are

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[21] See Gansten (2002: 19-22).
[22] See Whicher (1998: 42, 44 and 320, n. 3) for a discussion of dating the Yogasūtra and its commentaries. See also Whicher (1998: 50, passim), Chapple (1994), Bronkhorst (1984), and Tola & Dragonetti (1995) concerning Vyāsa's contribution to Yogasūtras. Among other commentators we may mention king Bhoja (11th century) and subcommentaries to Vyāsa by Vācaspati Miśra (9th century) and Vijñāna Bhikṣu (16th century). Another commentary to Vyāsa is Śaṅkara's *Vivaraṇa*, sometimes dated to 7th century. However, according to T.S. Rukmani (1998) it is most likely written some time between 12th and 14th century, thus not authored by the Śaṅkara of *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*. But cf. Staal (1995), who is not convinced that Rukmani has refuted Hacker's speculations on Śaṅkara as author of the Vivaraṇa, despite obvious differences in style and philosophy compared to, for example, the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya. Differences in ontology and the like can result from a thinker changing his mind, style may also certainly change over time. Thus, if we "indiscriminately lump together" what a

considerable controversies regarding authorship, composition, interpretation, heritage and the actual purposes of the text. Classical yoga indicates that the tradition based on *Yogasūtra* is recognized as the authoritative perspective of Yoga philosophy. It thus legitimated and synthesized preclassical yogic traditions as documented in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and epic texts, merging them together and molding a classical format. The name also entails something that has already happened in the past, emphasizing relative proximity to Patañjali's and Vyāsa's work, both in time and ideologically speaking.

The text actually consists of 195 *sūtra*s or aphorisms, a type of mnemonic devices utilized in an attempt to preserve knowledge when scriptural traditions had not yet fully developed. The extreme brevity and cryptic nature of *sūtra* texts made memorization easier, allowing for the continuation of a consistent, oral tradition. They were often a compilation of the presently authoritative views and would not recount individual contributions or variances, frequently being redacted in order to incorporate changes and innovations. This means that many of the early *sūtras*, such as the YS, were possibly the condensation of a long process of intellectual debate.[23] According to Sarbacker (2001: 156), the YS is more like an encyclopedia of meditation concepts, demonstrating its syncretistic role in bringing together a range of *śramaṇa* practices with more contemporary ideas at the time of its writing. In any case, the text should be approached with these circumstances held in mind, recognizing that due to its format it is bound to be susceptible to a range of varying interpretations.

Classical Yoga can be viewed in terms of what has been called a 'tradition text' (Larson 1999).[24] The form of presentation which uses a basic *sūtra* followed by commentaries can be seen as a mechanism for creative development, in which the various commentaries hermeneutically form parts of a continuing argument or text. The exegetical material thus continuously expands, refines, modifies and presents new arguments and ideas. The 'tradition text' consists of the *sūtra*, together with other authoritative sources, as well as the ongoing exegetical work. This means that, seen as a whole, the philosophical perspective of classical Yoga cannot be reduced to one collection or text, but is rather to be regarded as "a cumulative tradition unfolding over time [and] involving many voices and numerous exegetical interventions" (p. 723). Moreover, argues Larson, the terminology of different 'tradition texts' tend to overlap in the course of time. For example, the YS appears to be a hybrid formulation derived from the tradition text of old Sāṅkhya philosophy and the early tradition text of Buddhist philosophy as explicated by Vasubandhu (p. 725). In Larson's view the *Yogasūtra* presents "an updating of the old Sāṃkhya, a creative intervention in the 'tradition text' of Sāṃkhya in an attempt to bring the old Sāṃkhya into conversation with many of the issues that were developing in the early classical period, that is, *ca.*, the fourth and fifth centuries of the Common Era" (p. 727).[25]

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thinker stated at different periods we will almost certainly find incoherence and contradiction, and sometimes, we might add, perhaps even within the same work!

[23] See Frauwallner (1973: 217ff.) and King (1999a: 51).

[24] Larson refers in this article to Eliot Deutsch as the originator of this term. See Larson & Deutsch (1988, *Interpreting Across Boundaris*, Princeton University Press).

[25] Larson also enumerates six especially salient differences between the Sāṅkhya of the YS and of the so-called *Sāṅkhyasūtra* (pp. 728-731). Also compare Bronkhorst (1984), as well as Rukmani's, Schreiner's, and Whicher's contributions in the same issue of *Asiatische Studien* as Larson (1999).

Affinities of Patañjali's thought with Buddhist ideas may have been even stronger than with the conceptual universe of Sāṅkhya (Werner 2000: 75; 1989: 27-8), but the relationship between Buddhism and classical Yoga is a complex and controversial issue. Sarbacker (2001) argues that numerous levels of comparison demonstrate an intimate relationship between the meditative practices of classical Yoga and Buddhism (p. 156).[26] In any case, it is beyond doubt that Patañjali largely proceeds from the theoretical framework of Sāṅkhya, which does seem patently dualistic, polarizing Spirit or 'seer' (*puruṣa, draṣṭṛ*) from Nature or that which is seen (*prakṛti, dṛśya* . But how are we to understand its "dualism" in the case of classical Yoga? This is a contentious issue. Whicher argues that Patañjali in fact wished to overcome this dualism in his 'updating' of the Sāṅkhya, that he only used it as a guide to yogic practice:

> Yoga scholarship has not clarified what "dualistic" means or why Yoga had to be "dualistic". Even in avowedly nondualistic systems such as Advaita Vedānta we can find numerous examples of basically dualistic modes of description and explanation. It does not seem inappropriate to suggest the possibility of Patañjali having asserted a provisional, descriptive, and "practical" metaphysics. (Whicher 1998: 55)

It is certainly possible, as Whicher argues, that Patañjali appropriated Sāṅkhyan dualism for pragmatic reasons, not for staking ontological claims. It is however difficult to speculate about this, coming to any final conclusions. For our purposes it is enough to state that there is a tension between practice and theory, as well as experience and speculation, in both classical and modern Yoga traditions. Whatever Patañjali might have intended is beyond our reach. Nevertheless, to avow that YS is fully based on experience and should be approached only through phenomenology is to ignore the markedly communicative and social aspects even of a mystical philosophy or of meditation-theory. Instead, we should acknowledge also the systematizing and philosophical aspirations of the *Yogasūtra*. A study of modern Haṭha Yoga traditions should be receptive to these issues, perhaps entailing an analysis of how modern representatives tend to view the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti,* and not necessarily opting for one or the other interpretation.

In my view, there exists an ambivalence throughout the history of Yoga, which presents us with a range of monistic, non-dualistic and dualistic interpretations, as well as other possibilities. This ambivalence is witnessed also in various readings of the *Yogasūtra*. Even Feuerstein, who interprets Patañjali as propagating radical dualism, acknowledges that the term 'isolation' (*kaivalya*)—in *Yogasūtra* often interpreted as denoting radical separation from *prakṛti*—has been used in the *Dhyāna-bindu Upaniṣad*, as "merging with the Divine rather than perfect separation from Nature" (1998: 422). Similarly, he argues that in the *Mandala Brāhmana Upaniṣad* the term "dissolution of the mind" (*manonāśa*) must "not be misunderstood as a willful obliteration of one's rational faculties. Rather, it stands for the yogic process of transcending the conventional mind, which revolves around the pivot of the ego-

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[26] See chapter four, "Classical Yoga and Buddhism in Comparison", in Sarbacker (2001) for a survey of literature on this subject, including the "early" scholars, e.g. Sénart, La Vallée Poussin, and Oldenburg, as well as "later" works by Eliade, Cousins, Crangle, Larson and Bronkhorst. Few would however be willing to go as far as Feuerstein (1998), who avers that Yoga is common to both cultural traditions and forms their "spiritual essence". Also compare Whicher (1998: 50-58, 325, n. 4); Frauwallner (1973: 221ff.); Bronkhorst (1986); Cousins (1992); Larson (1999, 1989)).

sense" (1998: 433). These are currents within the stream of yogic traditions that emphasize more non-dualistic notions, and which may have influenced contemporary interpretations of the *Yogasūtra*. In fact, Whicher argues that the dominant philosophical position within Hinduism, prior to the *Yogasūtra* and including Upaniṣadic writings and the *Mahābhārata*, has been nondualistic or panentheistic.

> Thus, most Yoga thought or schools that preceded Patañjali, or that subsequently developed after the *Yoga-Sūtra*, have advocated some form of nondualism or theism. Indeed, yogic (Hindu) teachings that arose after Patañjali—as recorded, for example, in the *Yoga Upaniṣads, Yogavāsiṣṭha*, Hindu tantric works (e.g., the *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*), works in Kashmiri Śaivism, and *haṭha-yoga*—can be seen as reaffirmations of a nondual understanding of reality and are informed more by the metaphysics of, for example, (Advaita) Vedānta than by the Sāmkhyan dualistic framework. Are we to understand Patañjali's Yoga as a system that 'can almost be regarded as an interlude in a tradition that was from the outset nondualistic'?[27] (Whicher 1998: 305)

This might very well be so, but nevertheless there *are* other options, and within nondualism there are also many variations, with important differences between them. On the one hand we may recognize the high status of nondualist philosophies such as Advaita Vedānta—thus acknowledging the possibility of a specific Yoga tradition being positioned within the overarching umbrella of nondualism. On the other hand, we could always argue that not everything is then automatically embraced by this philosophy, and that there may well be important exceptions. Allowing for a diversity of interpretations would then be an important issue in a study of modern Yoga traditions.

2.4   THE YOGA VĀSIṢṬHA

Another very important text is the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* (YV), which has had considerable influence on Yoga and Vedānta.[28] This is a philosopical epic, with 32 000 verses the largest of its kind, in the form of an imaginary dialogue between the ancient hero Rāma and his teacher Vaśiṣṭha. Feuerstein contends that it espouses a "radically nondualist philosophy" (1998: 402); there is only consciousness (*citta*), and mind (*manas*) must be transcended to break down the habit of wrong conceptualization. This is the path of *jñāna-yoga* (*buddhi-yoga* in *Bhagavad Gītā*) in which action and knowledge is blended and extreme asceticism disdained. There is no point in external renunciation, only inner reorientation, coinciding with "mental liberation" (*cetya-nirmuktatā*). The text stresses cognitive dimensions of Yoga, coupled with nonemotionality (*avedanā*), and aims at a non-ascetic "liberation while living" (*jīvanmukti*). Feuerstein (p. 403-4) asserts that restriction (*samrodha*) of the life force (*prāṇa*) is seen as the most direct means of quieting the mind, whereas concentration and meditation are only aids. (This may be compared to the conceptions found within Haṭha Yoga.)

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[27] Quote is from Feuerstein's (1990: 82) *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*. New York: Paragon House.

[28] Slaje (1990, 1993) points out that the YV is quoted as early as 13th century CE by Vidyāraṇya, who apparently exploited it for purposes of the Śaṅkarite tradition, strongly influencing later Vedānta authors such as Madhusūdana, Vijñānabhikṣu and Prakāśānanda. It may also have functioned as a literary source for several of the so-called Minor Upaniṣads. Indeed, "the influence the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* later exerted on the mental culture of India is comparable only with that of the *Bhagavad Gītā*" (1990: 148).

Indologist Walter Slaje has in a number of publications studied a recently discovered Kashmiri recension of the text, called the *Mokṣopāya* ('The Means To Release').[29] Slaje argues that the *Mokṣopāya* is an anonymous work composed prior to the 10th century A.D., whereas the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* is a modified version of the former, produced during the subsequent (ca. 11th to 14th) centuries. Indeed, the Mokṣopāya was bowdlerized and

> … its philosophical message was made palatable to conservative Hinduism in a revised version ("Yogavasistha"), which succeeded in defusing the heterodox content of the original, while the older version of the text was gradually eclipsed. It thus came to be considered an orthodox work on Advaita Vedantic philosophy and as such became a major source of the Vedantic concept of 'liberation in life'. … Despite the fact that both versions contain more or less the same text, the process of revision has distorted the original philosophy of the text and in general lowered the textual quality…[30]

The *Mokṣopāya* manuscripts thus represent a text which is by far closer to the original, now lost, composition (Slaje 2000: 171). Slaje (1990, 1993) argues that the *Mokṣopāya* resembles a synthesis of Vedānta and Buddhist Vijñānavāda conceptions,[31] a subjective idealism (or illusionism) similar to that espoused in Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍukya-kārikā*.[32] It attempts to show that "the appearance of the world is a mere fancy of the perceiving subject (*jīva*), and that perception itself, which is identical with the *jīva*, is the true 'creator' of each subjective world" (1990: 150). It differs from Śaṅkara's Advaita, not least in the preference of reflection (*vicāra*) over the use authoritative scriptures (*śruti*).[33] Slaje is convinced that "the very idea of *jīvanmukti* in

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[29] See Slaje (1990, 1993, 1998, 2002). See also the website of "The Moksopaya Project" at http://www.indologie.uni-halle.de/mu/mu.htm for an extended bibliography (viewed February 2003).

[30] Taken from the "Preface" at the website (http://www.indologie.uni-halle.de/mu/mu.htm). Slaje particularly polemicizes against Vidyāraṇya's use of the YV. In a recent article (1998) he contends that it is possible that the composition of the later Sāmānyavedānta and Yoga Upaniṣads, mainly using material from the YV, paved the way for Vidyāraṇya's concepts of *jīvanmukti* (p. 117), who then adapted it to the dharma of "orthodox brahmanism" as well as to Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta and to the Yoga Darśana (p. 116). Vidyāraṇya's work *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (ca. 1380) is in fact based on "a deliberate selection and interpretation of differing concepts with a view to concealing their original meaning" (p. 103). Vidyāraṇya thus tries to prove the possibility of *jīvanmukti* by "detecting" it in reputed works of the orthodox brahmanical traditions such as the YV. In my opinion, Slaje is perhaps overstating his case, more or less denigrating Vidyāraṇya's work as being forgery. But what do we know of his intentions? Perhaps we may more appropriately speak of hybridization and reinterpretation instead, thus acknowledging that the renouncement-based doctrines expressed in *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (JV) may be biased reinterpretations of the YV, albeit controversial.

[31] Although, as J.W. de Jong points out, the resemblance of YV philosophy to Yogācāra has not been closely examined. For example, the use of *arthakriyā* may go back to Dharmakīrti and other Buddhist philosophers, they are however also found in the works of Vedāntic opponents, thus perhaps indicating the influence of later Vedāntic ideas (De Jong, 1981, "Book Review" in *WZKS*, 23, pp. 221-6). Cf. also S. Dasgupta's remarks in Vol II of *A History of Indian Philosophy* (1932, p, 32, 108, 231).

[32] This depends of course on how we are to understand Gauḍapāda. Cf. for example Richard King's study, *Early Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism: The Mahāyāna Context of the Gauḍapādīya-kārikā*, 1995, New York: SUNY Press, which on the face of it does not seem to be compatible with Slaje's interpretation.

[33] Cf. De Jong (1997, book review in *Indo-Iranian Journal,* 40:3, 290-3), who writes that the author of YV "made use of arguments (*yukti*) which consisted of stories (*kathā/ākhyāna*) concerning events suitable as examples (*dṛṣṭānta*) to be applied in order to illustrate the highest truth" (p. 291). De Jong describes him as an adherent of strict mind-monism (*cit-advaita*), a subjective illusionism—opposed to the objective illusionism of Śaṅkara—developed on the basis of the identity of subject and object of

the Mokṣopāya is historically linked to an epic current of particular liberation theories originally intended for householders such as the Kṣatriyas" (2000: 177).

Slaje argues that in the *Mokṣopāya* it is knowledge (*jñāna*) which brings about dispassion (*vairāgya*), whereas as for example the *Yogasūtra* takes dispassion as a means to an end (I.12) (2000: 175-6). This is however debatable. Whicher (1998: 178-9) argues, following Vyāsa, that there is a higher stage of dispassion (*para-vairāgya*), associated with supracognitive *samādhi* (*asaṃprajñāta*, VB I.18), which is nothing but clarity of knowledge. This is a pure state of Self-knowledge, synonymous with freedom from all craving (*vaitṛṣṇya*). Indeed, according to Vyāsa (VB I.16), "the ultimate limit of knowledge is dispassion. After this very state of dispassion aloneness follows".[34] It thus appears difficult to separate higher dispassion from higher knowledge, because "without the higher dispassion liberation cannot be attained, at least not by discriminative discernment (*vivekakhyāti*) in itself" (Whicher 1998: 179). Aloneness follows immediately from dispassion, perhaps not even being different from the culmination of dispassion itself.[35] In any case, it seems that the exact relationship between knowledge and dispassion, similar to the tension between knowledge and action, may be viewed differently with different interpreters and practitioners. There is no definite or final conclusion as to how the YS or M are to be understood regarding this particular issue. Comparing these two texts may also prove to be fruitful to an analysis of modern Haṭha Yoga.

According to Slaje, the *Mokṣopāya* favors a kind of *samādhi* totally different from the YS, a form of "internal calmness" or detachment (*antaḥśītalatā*) (2000: 178). This type of wakeful *samādhi*, he argues, differs significantly from Patañjali's, which is incompatible with engaging in everyday activities. This is also, however, a contentious issue. Again, Whicher (1998) has forcefully argued that we might understand the subtlest stage of *samādhi* in the Pātañjala tradition not as an introvertive and inactive condition but as a temporary state which must then be integrated with ordinary life :

> While it may be said that in enstasy (*asaṃprajñāta*) there is temporary suspension of the mental processes as well as any identification with objects (i.e., the functioning of *vṛtti*), it would be misleading to conclude that higher *samādhi* results in a definitive cessation of the *vṛtti*s in total …, predisposing the yogin to exist in an incapacitated, isolated or mindless state and therefore incapable of living a balanced, useful, and productive life in the world. (Whicher 1998: 268)

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knowledge, and the idea that the world has not originated (*ajātatva*). The rational plane of conceptual thought is transcended by study of examples, intimating the absolute by means of paraphrase. Compare with Slaje, who argues that M may well be a primary source for that line of the particular tradition of Vedānta attested to by Śāntarakṣita and Prakāśātman (1990: 151), a catalyst for the tradition later called *Dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* (1993: 309). There is also a close historical linking with the Trika school of Kashmir, being deeply rooted in its views and perhaps even partly written there. This is reflected especially in terminology and metaphysical conceptions, such as its monism of pure consciousness underlying all appearances.

[34] VB 1.16: *jñānasyaiva parā kāṣṭhā vairāgyam / etasyaiva hi nāntarīyakaṃ kaivalyam iti //* Whicher's translation (1998: 179). Cf. Baba's translation, "Non-attachment is indeed the highest state of Knowledge; because Absolute-ness follows immediately after this" (1999: 9), with Woods's "It is just this uttermost limit limit of knowledge that is passionlessness. For it is with this that Isolation, as they term it, is inseparably connected" (1998: 38).

[35] Also cf. Oberhammer (1977: 159), who essentially argues the same point.

> This supracognitive awareness must be cultivated under all conditions including during … ordinary involvement in the world. While performing all the necessary duties of the world … the yogin continues to reflect upon all knowledge (*vṛtti*) as it arises in the mind. The yogin then traces this "flow" of knowledge back to the pure knower (*puruṣa*) of knowledge until the *saṃskāra*s that formerly corrupted the attention needed for this purpose become so weakened that enstasy becomes increasingly integrated with the wakeful state. (Whicher 1998: 271-2)

Even if the M emphasizes the attainment of knowledge (*jñāna*) through reflection (*vicāra*), it is not at all clear that this methodical procedure would be thoroughly incompatible with YS and *aṣṭāṅgayoga*.[36] Are knowledge (attained through reflection) and action (the practice of meditation or dispassion) fundamentally or ultimately incompatible? Or are they tensions, constituting a "playfield" that constrain dialogue in various ways but not completely determines it? This problem also has ramifications in soteriological conceptions: is the goal of Yoga to turn away from the world or toward it?

The highest stage of awareness in *Mokṣopāya*, *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, "represents the detached state of a *jīvanmukti*, a state of *liberation from intentionality and from involvement already while living*, an uninterrupted awareness of the absolute impossibility that any real creation would ever have come into existence" (Slaje 2000: 180). This notion is "connected with the development of an earlier current of liberation theories where the neutralization of *karmic* retribution was sought through complete detachment from everything, … brought about only by insight or correct knowledge and *not* by means of contemplation, asceticism (*tapas*) and renouncement (*saṃnyāsa*)" (ibid). This differs from Śaṅkarian Advaita Vedānta and much of Yoga practice, as Slaje is quick to point out. The differences are notable particularly regarding variant understandings of epistemology, engagement in the world, and the means whereby to attain release.

2.5   THE YOGA UPANIṢADS

Included within the so-called "minor" Upaniṣads we find several important treatises on Yoga that also contain interesting details on practices. These are the approximately twenty *Yoga Upaniṣads*, modeled on the earlier Upaniṣads but for the most part probably belonging to the post-Patañjali era. According to Feuerstein's chronology the earliest so-called *Bindu Upaniṣads* were composed ca. 900-1200 CE and the others ca. 1150-1250 CE (1998: 597-8)[37], whereas Flood (1996: 96) assigns them 100 BCE to 300 CE, though this seems much too early. The considerable differences in dating are interesting since it has a bearing on how we are to understand the relationship to Tantra, Haṭha Yoga and classical Yoga.

Several of these works use material similar to that used in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, although, as Sprockhoff (1963) points out, it is difficult to determine who borrowed from whom and whether or not they simply have a common source. Some scholars

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[36] Again Slaje maybe stretches his point too far, also denying any legitimacy to the notion of "Yogic Advaita" as proposed by Fort & Mumme (1996). Perhaps there are important differences between JV and YV, though there may well be sufficient analogies between YV, early Advaita and YS to justify the name "Yogic Advaita". For an interesting comparison between Vidyāraṇya and the Yogasūtra, see Fort (1999).

[37] See Feuerstein (1998: 415) for arguments on the datings of the five *Bindu Upaniṣads*.

have argued that several of the Minor Upaniṣads were, or entailed, abridged editions of the YV, whereas Sprockhoff is content with demonstrating the many passages that have similar or verbatim correspondences between JV, YV and the later Upaniṣadic literature.

There are several recurring themes shared by a few of the texts, such as the complementarity of self-knowledge and yogic practice, expositions on esoteric anatomy, lists of paranormal powers, Vedāntic metaphysics, and varying interpretations of stages and limbs, only occasionally compatible with the YS.[38] Feuerstein (1998: 413) avers that they all promulgate a Vedāntic type of Yoga. In my opinion, however, this judgment seems a bit rash. Philosophical material is often too scant to draw any definite conclusions, and the texts as a whole, their interrelationships as well as references to other texts, have not been sufficiently studied, as Feuerstein himself readily admits. Nevertheless, there is a definite influence of Vedānta and Tantra, though the exact relationship to classical Yoga is unclear. Several of them use *kaivalya* as the term for liberation, which is the one used in the *Yogasūtra*.

Flood (1996: 96) regards the *Yogatattva* ('Principles of Yoga') as being the most famous. This text mentions four kinds of Yoga—*mantra, laya, haṭha* and *rāja-yoga*—and the magical powers or "perfections" (*siddhi*) gained by the yogin. It proposes a combination of *jñāna* and yogic technology, also aligning Haṭha and Rāja Yoga practice. The *Yogatattva* is part of a group of the *Yoga Upaniṣads* that focus on Haṭha or Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, outlining techniques designed to awaken and harness the *kuṇḍalinī* energy. The texts in this group are possibly products of the 12th to 13th centuries (Feuerstein 1998: 437).[39] The *Yogakuṇḍalī* espouses the ideal of disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti)* and mentions different types of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma,* I.19-39) and "locks" (*bandha,* I.40-53). It states that "postures are said to be of two kinds: the Padmāsana and the Vajrāsana" (I.4).[40] This certainly indicates the lesser importance of postures while focusing on the taming of *prāṇa* and *kuṇḍalinī*, which is typical of tantric yoga. Another text in this group is the *Yogaśikha* ('Crest of Yoga'), with a total of 390 verses the most comprehensive of all the *Yoga Upaniṣads*. It has a similar list of breath-control practices and locks (I.86-112) as the *Yogakuṇḍalī*, and the same list of styles as in the *Yogatattva*: "*Mantra-, laya-, haṭha-,* and *rāja-yoga* at the end, are the steps in order. This *Mahāyoga* is only one, but is called by four different names" (I.129).[41] The *Yogakuṇḍalī* develops the theme of combining wisdom and yogic practice, only together can they make a person "ripe" (*paripakva*).[42] It has a separate chapter on Vedāntic metaphysics, as does the *Varāha*, yet another text in this group. The latter also introduces *bhakti-yoga* as the true means of liberation, though *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* is also advised.

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[38] See Sastri (1983) for a sanskrit edition with the commentary of Śrī Upaniṣad Brahmayogin, and Ayyangar (1952) for translation. In the following text all original material from the *Yoga Upaniṣads* use these sources together with Feuerstein's (1998: chp 15) summaries, unless otherwise noted. Ayyangar's translation is based on the commentary supplied in Sastri's edition.

[39] The rest being *Yogakuṇḍalyupaniṣad, Yogaśikhopaniṣad, Varāhopaniṣad, Śāṇḍilyopaniṣad, Triśikhi-brāhmaṇopaniṣad, Darśanopaniṣad,* and *Yogacūḍāmaṇyupaniṣad.*

[40] Transl. Ayyangar (1952: 252). I.4: *āsanaṃ dvividhiṃ proktaṃ padmaṃ vajrāsanaṃ tathā.*

[41] Transl. Ayyangar (1952: 352). I.129: *mantro layo haṭho rājayogāntā bhūmikāḥ kramāt / eka eva caturdhāyaṃ mahāyogo'bhidhīyate //*

[42] It is curious to note that these texts do not, on the whole, consider *jñāna* as a separate strand of yoga, but rather as an indistinguishable part of *Mahāyoga*, or similar, practice.

The five *Bindu Upaniṣads* espouse a form of mantra-yoga, building upon Vedic speculations about the sacred sound "OM", which symbolizes the Absolute. Its echo, *bindu*, is thought to represent the Divine in its unmanifest dimension, "latent concentrated power—whether it be of consciousness or of sound, or of Nature itself" (Feuerstein 1998: 414). Mantras are used as a means of focusing and ultimately transcending the mind. There is a high level of sophistication in 'yogic psycho-technology' and metaphysical speculation, greatly influenced by Tantra. The *Amṛtanāda(bindu)* treats mantra meditation as part of a sixfold (*ṣaḍaṅga*) yoga (in verse 6): sense-withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna*), breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), reflection (*tarka*) and ecstasy (*samādhi*).[43] The *Nādabindu* teaches that the end state is one of total mental repose, perfect indifference to worldly existence, in line with the ideal of disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*). By contrast, the *Amṛtabindu* says that by meditating on the unsounded (*asvara*) or imperishable (*akṣara*) aspects of the *om-mantra*, the spiritual practitioner is assured of finding peace, which is identification with the Brahman in the form of Vāsudeva (verse 22).[44] The *Dhyānabindu* in parts seems like a work of Haṭha Yoga. It teaches a six-limbed form of *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*, and the recitation of the *haṃsa* ("swan") mantra.[45] The *Tejobindu* is the longest of these texts, six chapters with a total of 465 verses, teaching a fifteen limbed Yoga (*pañcadaśa-aṅga*).

Among the rest of the *Yoga Upaniṣads*, we may mention the *Haṃsa* and the *Brahmavidyā*, both teaching a form of Haṃsa Yoga. According to this idea the breath, technically known as the "swan", is also a manifestation of the transcendental Self. Silent recitation of *haṃsa*, esoterically interpreted as so' ham ("I am He"), is a form of spontaneous prayer of the breath, always following its flow. Tāraka Yoga (literally "deliverer" but here denoting a photistic yoga), which avails itself of the higher vibrations of both white and colored light, is a form that appears to have been fairly widespread in India during the medieval period (Feuerstein 1998: 426). It has similarities with Clear Light trends in Vajrayāna Buddhism and is elaborated upon especially in the *Advayatāraka* and *Maṇḍalabrāhmana Upaniṣads*, the latter which attempts to integrate Tāraka and Haṭha within Patañjali's eightfold yoga but with idiosyncratic definitions of each limb. Finally we may mention *Kṣurika*, a short work with an interesting angle on concentration (*dhāraṇā*). Meditation and yoga is here likened to a sharp blade (*kṣurika*) which cuts through all binding conditions and frees the spirit.

2.6 TANTRISM AND HAṬHA YOGA

Haṭha Yoga is originally an offshoot of Tantrism, the ideal of which, according to Feuerstein (1998), "is to live in the world out of the fullness of Self-realization rather

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[43] See Feuerstein (1998: 416-420) for a translation. For some reason he has chosen to insert "*bindu*" in the title, which is not to be found in Sastri's edition and Ayyangar's translation. The whole text is only 38 verses long.

[44] See Feuerstein (1998: 45-47) for a complete rendering of this text, being only 22 verses long. Feuerstein here compares its philosophical position to that of the *Vivekacudāmani*, Śaṅkara's classic manual, viewing the mind as the source point of either bondage or spiritual liberation.

[45] This is one of those texts where Feuerstein acknowledges that the term *kaivalya* is used differently from Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, "here it means merging with the Divine rather than perfect separation from Nature" (1998: 422).

than to withdraw from life in order to gain enlightenment" (p. 39). Before we proceed with Haṭha Yoga, it is therefore necessary to examine more closely what constitutes Tantrism.

Tantrism may be said to introduce a new style of spirituality, initiated some time around the opening centuries of the first millennium CE and with the oldest literary records dating from ca. 500 CE (the earliest Hindu tantras are however lost). These so-called 'tantras' are often dedicated to the feminine principle (*śakti*), drawing on existing lore and ritual practices revolving around Goddess worship. The Hindu tantras typically revolve around the same gods and goddesses, and have a characteristic form or style, consisting of "semidialogues" between god and goddess (White 1996: 142). Historically, argues Feuerstein, Tantrism was primarily a grassroots movement,

> responding to a widely felt need for a more practical orientation that would integrate the lofty metaphysical ideas of nondualism with down-to-earth procedures for living a sanctified life without necessarily abandoning one's belief in the local deities and the age-old rituals for worshiping them. (Feuerstein 1998: 456)

Tantrism introduced elaborate Goddess worship and ritual sexuality, rejecting the purism of orthodoxy and reclaiming "for the spiritual process all those aspects of existence that the mainline traditions excluded by way of renunciation—sexuality, the body, and the physical universe at large" (ibid: 457). The human body acquires an unprecedented importance, inaugurated by a dynamic view of the universe and a new attitude to bodily existence. Enlightenment was now seen as "a whole-body event" (ibid: 507).

One common theme in Tantrism is the idea of continuity, the overcoming of dualisms through positing a continuum. The perhaps most famous formula is that of "saṃsāra equals nirvāṇa". Tantric texts typically focus on practice (*sādhana*) and describing elaborate hierarchical cosmologies. There is a common ritual structure that involves the purification of the body, stemming from the conception that the body is divine and contains the cosmic hierarchy within it. There is also an interest in the attainment of magical powers (*siddhi*) and the experience of bliss in higher worlds; typically in the form of a concern with possession (*āveśa*) and exorcism (Flood 1996: 160). There are of course many varieties within Tantrism, the historically most important being the nondualist. White (1996) views the goals of the great majority of nondualist tāntrikas as involving "total autonomy, omniscience, superhuman powers, bodily immortality, and a virtual identification with godhead" (p. 143). The universe of the tantric traditions, particularly of the nondualist variety,

> is a *divine*, worldaffirming universe... It is also an *anthropic* universe, seemingly created for human self-realization... The tantric universe is a *pulsating, vibratory* universe, in which matter, souls and sound are the stuff of the outpouring of godhead into manifestation…. It is a *bipolar, sexualized* universe, in which all change and transformation are viewed as so many instances of an interpenetration of male and female principles … It is a vertically *hierarchized* universe, in which that which is higher, closer to the source of all manifestation, is subtler and capable of encompassing, penetrating into, and reabsorbing into itself that which is lower on the great chain of being. … And, ultimately, the tantric universe is an *emancipating* universe, a universe that is primordially and virtually free: born of the boundless playing out of divine consciousness, its very constituent part, including the human body and spirit, as well as brute matter, are intrinsically free. Tantrism therefore places a high premium on experience—bodily, practical, concrete experience—which, in conjunction with knowledge, is liberating. (White 1996: 143-4)

It is essential to have a clear conception of the Tantric 'universe' in order to understand the religious sphere and cultural dynamic which Haṭha Yoga was a part of. Consequently, it is also an important resource when analyzing the reformation of Haṭha Yoga in modern times. In fact, many of the features that modern Yoga traditions are claimed by some interpreters to have adopted through modernization, Westernization and secularization, are present already in the Tantric background and sources of Haṭha Yoga. These would include, for example, the premium on experience and bodily perfection, as well as an appraisal of living in the here and now through affirming a divine universe and the emphasis on individual autonomy, thus shunning the idea of renunciation. On the other hand, especially the Krishnamacharya traditions have rejected or avoided other elements of Tantrism, such as elaborate cosmologies and the idea of a bipolar, sexualized universe.

According to Sarbacker (2001: 171-5), Tantrism develops an approach to religious practice based in the connection of the philosophical and the esoteric, and is characterized by the conjunction of conceptions of the *numinous* (development of special powers of action and perception) and the *cessative* (the strive for detachment and release).[46] As a manner of practicing religion, Tantrism is in many respects the paradigm for what could be seen as a "peripheral cult", in that its practices did not fit into mainstream morality and the powers that exemplify it are thoroughly ambiguous, lending to the predominance of *siddhi* ("accomplishment") over *bodhi* ("awakening"). However, to the degree to which tantric practices were reintegrated into the mainstream, they also reflect the need to reconcile these dimensions (p. 191).

Around the ninth century, Haṭha Yoga arose as part of this religio-cultural dynamic, its origins thus overlapping considerably with both the tantric and alchemical traditions of medieval India (White 1996: 142).[47] According to White, it emerged as a result of reforms *within* the medieval Nāth Siddha tradition,[48] in large

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[46] Sarbacker's discussion, however, mainly draws on Buddhist Tantra (*Vajrayāna*) and should be extended by studies in Hindu traditions. Compare Herbert Guenther in *The Dawn of Tantra* (1975, Random House), who notes that, even though both traditions used Sanskrit terms, they stipulated particular uses: "What one tradition understood by a specific term was not necessarily what the other tradition understood by it" (p. 2).

[47] White (1996: 142) enumerates three "compelling" arguments for this view: 1. many tantric sources mention Haṭha Yoga and alchemy, either directly or by way of illustration, 2. alchemical and haṭhayogic sources often claim to be tantric, 3. nearly all alchemical and haṭhayogic teachers or authors postdate foundational tantric compendia. Partly in contrast to White, King (1999a: 71) contends that Haṭha Yoga developed out of Rāja Yoga. Though it certainly made use of an eclectic set of practices, containing highly archaic elements, King points out that the classical texts of Haṭha Yoga claim compatibility with Rāja Yoga, especially the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* (ca. 14th century CE), the most famous of these texts. In my view, if Rāja Yoga is identified with the *Yogasūtra*, as it is in King's work, it remains mere speculation whether, and to what extent, early Haṭha Yoga practitioners were actually influenced by it. There is sufficient enough material that indicate a closer affiliation with the tantric and Siddha traditions than with the textual traditions of the *Yogasūtra*. Of course, it is a whole different matter if later representatives Haṭha Yoga then wished to incorporate or associate with classical Yoga, for whatever reason.

[48] According to White's (1996) comprehensive study of the medieval Siddha traditions, *siddha* means "realized, perfected one", and was generally applied to a practitioner who has realized his dual goal of superhuman powers (*siddhi*) and bodily immortality (*jīvanmukti*). It was also used as a broad sectarian appellation, applying to devotees of Śiva in the Deccan (*Māheśvara Siddhas*), alchemists in Tamil Nadu (*Sittars*), Buddhist tāntrikas from Bengal (*Mahāsiddhas, Siddhācāryas*), alchemists of medieval India (*Rasa Siddhas*) and the mainly north Indian group of *Nāth Siddhas*. The last two groups

part effected by the purported "founder" Gorakṣa(nātha)[49], who purged his Siddha tradition "of its erotico-mystical elements in favor of a nearly exclusively haṭhayogic emphasis" (ibid: 139). As originator of the Kānphaṭa order of the Nāths, Gorakṣa greatly expanded upon the haṭhayogic pole of Siddha practice, and is considered to be the author, if only by attribution, of the *Gorakṣa Saṃhitā*.[50] Both Gorakhnāth and his teacher Matsyendranāth—the chief representative of Nāthism and associated with the Kaula sect of the Siddha movement—were born in Bengal. The Kānphaṭa order is still present in India today, though apparently in a state of decline. Its members generally have a low social status, being both despised and feared for their putative powers (Feuerstein 1998: 513).

At the time of its conception, the purpose of Haṭha Yoga was the realization of liberation in life, in which the self awakens to its innate identity with the absolute (*sahaja*) (Flood 1996: 98). By promoting psycho-somatic techniques for transformation of the human into a divine (*divya*) or diamond (*vajra*) body (*śarīra*), Haṭha Yoga emphasized the physiological aspects of yogic practice. The primary aim was to prevent dissipation of the vital breath (*prāṇa*), thus awakening the 'serpent force' (*kuṇḍalinī*) coiled up at the lower end of the spinal column, symbolizing the power (*śakti*) inherent in the universe. This power should be caused to rise up the axial current of the body (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*) and reach the crown of the head (*sahasrāra-cakra*), where one attains full meditative concentration (*samādhi*) and the *kuṇḍalinī*-power transforms the consciousness and body of the practitioner (King 1999a: 72-3). In short, Haṭha Yoga is the "forceful enterprise in which the body's innate life force is utilized for the transcendence of the self" (Feuerstein 1998: 518).

In general, the textual documentation of Haṭha Yoga is poorly researched, often being obscure and difficult to interpret or date. There are many important Haṭha Yoga scriptures in addition to the *Yoga Upaniṣads*. Gorakṣa is credited with a great number of these works, but there is a great deal of overlap between the texts, many of which appear to be elaborations on his *Gorakṣa Śataka* (White 1996: 141). Feuerstein (1998: 530) claims the *Śataka* is a fragment of the *Gorakṣa Paddhati* ('Track of Gorakṣa')[51], which consists of 200 stanzas outlining the path of Haṭha Yoga (p. 530). The importance of the *Paddhati* can be gauged by the fact that many of its verses are found scattered throughout the later literature of Haṭha Yoga. Another important text ascribed to Gorakṣa is the *Sidda Siddhānta Paddhati*, a comprehensive work of 353 stanzas which develops the Nātha philosophy of the body (*piṇḍa*). The *Yoga Bīja* ('Seed of Yoga') is also ascribed to Gorakṣa, a compilation of 364 stanzas of which 264 are similar to those found in the *Yogaśikha Upaniṣad*. Of all the works attributed to Gorakṣa, and there are several more, not a single one can with certainty be regarded

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greatly overlapped one another (p. 2, cf. p. 99). The most important innovations of these traditions was the concrete and coherent method they proposed for the attainment of the Siddha world and Siddha status: "mere humans could, through their tantric, yogic, and alchemical practice, climb the ladder of being and accede to the ranks of the semidivine Siddhas" (p. 3).

[49] The correct Sanskrit form is Gorakṣanātha, Gorakṣa in short form, whereas in Hindi it becomes either Gorakhnāth or Gorakh (cf. Feuerstein 1998: 510).

[50] There are three texts that bear the name *Gorakṣa Saṃhitā*. The haṭhayogic version, White characterizes as a distinctly Western Transmission text, yet another indication of the interconnectedness between Haṭha Yoga and Nāth Siddha traditions (1996: 139-140).

[51] Translated in Feuerstein 1998, pp. 532-559. Feuerstein argues that it is unlikely to be authored by Gorakṣa, because its concepts and terminology belong to the twelfth or thirteenth.

as his creation. It might be the case that followers would credit their own works to a great master.

The *Yoga Yājñavalkya*, also known as the *Yoga Yājñavalkya Gīta (Upaniṣad)*, is a work of 485 stanzas and attributed to Yājñavalkya, different from the Upaniṣadic sage by that name (Feuerstein 1998: 562). The most important work is, however, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* ('Light on Haṭha Yoga'), composed in the middle of the fourteenth century by Svātmarāma, a follower of the Shaiva Yoga tradition of Andhra (p. 563). It is considered to be the classic manual on Haṭha Yoga, and expounds Haṭha Yoga as a means to Rāja Yoga. The last chapter deals with the ecstatic condition (*samādhi*) in Vedāntic terms (p. 564).[52] The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* was probably composed toward the end of the seventeenth century and is one of the best known works on Haṭha Yoga, its author following the Vaiṣnava Yoga tradition of Bengal (ibid). The *Śiva Saṃhitā* is also an important manual of Haṭha Yoga, apparently a work of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. According to Feuerstein, the first chapter is devoted to expounding Vedāntic nondualism (ibid).

The most voluminous text on Haṭha Yoga seems to be the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*, authored by Śrī Sundaradeva (1675-1775).[53] It is a unique text which serves as an encyclopedia on Haṭha Yoga, referring to many practices and concepts given in earlier texts. It cites the names of seventy two texts and six authors, also citing from yet other texts but without mentioning their source.

Given the paucity of historical evidence, it is difficult to say much conclusive about the development of Haṭha Yoga as a whole. It is however clear that, for a long time, Haṭha Yoga was a rather obscure and occult corner of the yoga realm, viewed with disdain by mainstream practitioners and kept alive by a small number of isolated ascetics in caves and Hindu monasteries. It appears to have existed for centuries in seed form, lying dormant and surfacing only occasionally. By the twentieth century, it had almost died out in India (Cushman 1999).

2.7   THE RISE OF MODERN YOGA

Delving into modern schools of Haṭha Yoga we must of course say something of modern Hinduism in general and those processes that were initiated by the encounter with colonizing powers, both politically and culturally speaking. This is a demanding and largely litigious topic. In the first place, it is not obvious that we may speak of "Hinduism" at all, at least not as a monolithic religion.[54] In fact, the term

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[52] Both the alignment with Rāja Yoga and the Vedāntic character may be reasons for its high status and poularity within modern Haṭha Yoga.

[53] This text is largely unstudied, and is not yet presented in a critical edition or translation. See Balasubramaniam (2000) for the following material.

[54] See Sontheimer & Kulke (1991). In this publication, Stietencron has recommended that we take Hinduism "to denote a socio-cultural unit or civilization which contains a plurality of distinct religions" (p. 11). By contrast, Sontheimer (1991) argues that it is more appropriate to approach Hinduism by distinguishing interrelated and continuously interacting components rather than split it into distinct religions. Flood (1996: 10-17) suggests a prototypical approach, so that Hinduism can be said to cluster around a set of general features. In a similar vein, Lipner (1994) sees Hinduism as an acceptable abbreviation for a *family* of culturally similar traditions, "a kind of unity-in-diversity" (p.5) . Frykenberg (1991: 32-3), however, asserts that "vagueness of usage has led this concept into trackless deserts of nonsense". Sarbacker (2001) also urges us to move "beyond orientalist conceptions of

itself is a relatively late innovation, reinforced both by colonial rule as well as the search for a Hindu identity that could defy the encroachment of other cultural powers. In any case, in the middle of the 19th century, the Hindu traditions began to respond to the British and Christian presence, attempting to restore the perceived greatness of their ancient past, to adopt rationalist elements from within Christianity, and to pay additional attention to social and ethical concerns. These reforms or changes are often referred to collectively as the "Hindu Renaissance", "Hindu Reformation", or simply "neo-Hinduism" (Halbfass 1995: 229-230).

The situation changed radically when India confronted the West. This was not any "ordinary" cross-cultural, interreligious encounter, but rather the *encounter between tradition and modernity*, "an exposure to new forms of organization and administration, to unprecedented claims of universality and globalization, to rationalization, technology, and a comprehensive objectification of the world. It also meant the advent of a new type of objectification of the Indian tradition itself, an unprecedented exposure to theoretical curiosity and historical 'understanding', and to the interests of research and intellectual mastery" (Halbfass 1990: 217). Such a radical challenge was bound to create a lasting impression.

Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), a Bengali Brahman often called the "father of modern India", would completely reverse the Indocentric and xenophobic attitude of classical Hindu thinkers; the encounter with the foreign now came to be seen as a positive challenge, as an opportunity for preserving and actualizing Hinduism's own potential (Halbfass 1990: 197-216).[55] Later, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), born Narendranātha Datta, was to become one of the leading figures of modern Hindu thought and self-awareness.

In Halbfass's description, the reinterpretations of neo-Hinduism center around the notions of *dharma* and *darśana*. The interpretation of *darśana* as a traditional Indian equivalent of "philosophy" based upon "experience" and "intuition" does not accord with traditional accounts but in fact amounts to a reversal of the relationship. In earlier tradition the role of experience is much more ambivalent, seen as the goal to strive for, in accordance with revelation, not as the foundation and legitimation of doctrine. The traditional way of dealing with canonical texts is not to measure them against the standard of personal experience, but rather to accept the status of revealed truth itself as the criterion and basis for legitimate experiences (Halbfass 1990: 300-3). Modern Hinduism typically views it the other way around: experience is now said to reveal or authenticate the truth of canonical texts.

Similarly, the notion of *dharma*, is reinterpreted by linking together different meanings of being and obligation, essence and norm, merging in the idea of "the essence of man" as the norm of human behavior. In this conception, religious duty is fulfilled through human self-perfection (ibid: 334-5). This reinterpretation and universalization of *dharma* expresses a desired sense of Hindu identity and continuity, but also makes possible claims that ethics and religion, social order and

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Hinduism and Buddhism through understanding their continuity within the greater scope of Indian culture, as opposed to seeing them as isolated entities" (p. 208).

[55] However, Halbfass warns us against overemphasizing the merely receptive and imitative aspects: "No matter what Rammohan may have adopted, he brought it into his own particular hermeneutic situation of appealing to and reflecting upon different traditions, of appropriating the alien, and of asserting himself against that alien" (1990: 207).

soteriological orientation, are fully integrated within the notion of 'religious duty', appearing as the "unity of all ideal ends", an idealized structure capable of reconciling the multitude of human modes of life (pp. 347-8).

Reinterpretation of *darśana* is an example of anachronistic reading of earlier traditions, in part even a reversal, whereas *dharma* is used an efficient tool for structuralizing, authorizing and monologizing Hindu religious discourses in accordance with an ethical reinterpretation. A study of modern Haṭha Yoga should involve taking a closer look at how these notions are used and reinterpreted.

There is not much adequate material to be found on the development of modern Yoga. Often the impression is that apologetic-minded scholars and practitioners seem to want to preserve an aura of mysteriousness, veiling the changes and innovations that contemporary representatives might have brought with them. Neglection may thus serve the promulgation of an unquestioned continuity of 'authentic' or 'ancient' Yoga. Alternatively, some writers view modern versions as complete distortions, entirely alien to 'real' Yoga, often because of the influence by modernity and the West. This also results in a neglection of contemporary forms of Yoga, though for a different reason than in the first case. Now re-connecting with 'genuine' tradition is seen as the all-important goal, and often stereotypes of East and West, as well as modern and ancient, are used for accomplishing such a project. Yet another, perhaps simpler, explanation is that modern Yoga, in popular opinion said to commence with the influence of Swami Vivekananda from 1893 and onwards, is too recent a phenomenon to have been sufficiently studied from a historical point of view.

As an example of an approach to modern Yoga which attempts to polarize 'correct' from 'distorted' versions (the latter often associated with contemporary Haṭha Yoga), Feuerstein asserts that "the most significant adaptations were made during the past several decades in order to serve the needs of Western students".[56] This is not altogether true. It may be argued that important re-interpretations were established on Indian soil before disseminating them to the West, adapted to the needs of Hindu identities in the face of colonialism and Western hegemony. Although Swami Vivekananda may perhaps be seen as an exception to this, even his interpretations also adapted variously to Indian and Western audiences. Moreover, reformation of Yoga traditions have been part of an ongoing process, constantly evolving and adopting new features with the development of society and through inter-cultural encounters.

In Feuerstein's account, the current of 'physical yoga' has been running parallel to the 'spiritual current', initiated by Shivapuri Baba, Swami Vivekananda, and others, all the way since the 1930s. He claims that "since Westernized hatha yoga has gone mainstream its promulgators have downplayed, if not altogether dropped, its spiritual aspects, and this secularized yoga has produced millions of practitioners who, at least thus far, have shown little interest in the spiritual side of yoga. … We are left with an uneasy divide between the physical culturists and the spiritually motivated practitioners."[57] Feuerstein continues:

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[56] From "Styles of Hatha Yoga" at *Yoga Research Center* (at http://www.yrec.org/publications.html).

[57] What Feuerstein calls the "secularization of yoga" in the West is supposed to have started with a mysterious writer who called himself Ramacharaka. It appears that this was the pseudonym of Chicago lawyer William Warren Atkinson (1862–1932), who might have studied in India with a

> Let us recall that the purpose of all traditional yoga is to set us inwardly free. Whatever the form, branch, or school of yoga, it always revolves around this pivotal, if elusive, thing called "freedom." ... Traditional yoga seeks to put us in touch with the dimension of spirit, which is inherently free. By contrast, as we have seen, most of contemporary yoga is not about inner freedom but about fitness and health. There is nothing wrong with fitness and health, they are simply not final objectives of traditional yoga, not even the now-so popular hatha yoga.[58]

In my view, this represents a considerable simplification of the history of Yoga, resting on stereotypes and on biased interpretations of 'authenticity' and 'tradition'. As will be argued, the 'spiritual' dimensions of Yoga is not completely opposed to dimensions of what may be called 'mundane attainment', whether physical or otherwise, though contemporary forms often do represent taking new directions of emphasis. It is certainly possible, perhaps even desirable, to criticize certain modern Haṭha Yoga versions for superficiality, lack of factuality, and so on, but this may be done without introducing simplified and biased historical accounts.

Turning to the developments in modern Yoga, the following should be seen as a preliminary sketch, the starting point for further inquiry.[59]

Shivapuri Baba (alias Swami Govindananda Bharati, born in 1826 and claimed to have lived 137 years!) appears to have been the first modern yogi to teach in the West. He particularly emphasized moral disciplines, also insisting on the importance of the yogi to become a fully functional member of society. Because of Queen Victoria's interest in him, Shivapuri Baba was well received in certain exclusive circles in Europe.

It was, however, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), disciple of Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886), who disseminated Yoga to larger spheres. In a famous speech at the 1893 Parliament of Religions, convened as part of the World's Fair in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda is said to have electrified his enthusiastic American audience, propagating a message of inter-religious tolerance. According to Strauss (1997: 5-7, 87-93), Vivekananda's presentation of Yoga reflects an eclectic mix of various traditional Hindu texts and Western ideas about rationality, charity, equality, and individualism. His simplified classificatory scheme of yoga ideology and practice as a four-fold set was designed specifically for consumption by middle-class, English-speaking audiences, first developed for the West and only later conveyed to Indian audiences. His ability to frame these traditions in English was a prerequisite for generating worldwide interest in them. He polarized the "spirituality" of yoga against Western materialism, creating a link between the Advaita tradition and Western evolutionary thought, and focused attention on the notion of practice.

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certain Baba Bharata. His books were widely read for many decades, setting the stage for what Feuerstein calls "physical culture".

[58] From the article "The Lost Teachings" by Georg Feuerstein, located at Yoga International Magazine (www.yimag.org), viewed in November 2002.

[59] Unless otherwise stated, the material presented in the following is taken from articles by Georg Feuerstein: "The Lost Teachings", located at Yoga International Magazine (www.yimag.org), © 2000 Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the U.S.A., and "Styles of Hatha Yoga", "Yoga styles", "Yoga organizations", "A short history of Yoga" and "Forty types of Yoga", from *Yoga Research Center* (at http://www.yrec.org/publications.html). Considering Feuerstein´s bias, his sources for writing a history of modern yoga should be checked and complemented with other material, not least on the development in Europe. This has not been possible however within the time and scope of this study.

Merging together systems of thought and practice with widely disparate origins and purposes through unifying discourses, "Vivekananda used Patañjali's yoga as a basis for building a neo-traditional yoga which incorporated elements of tantra as well as a commitment to social service activities" (p. 93). These yoga practices were placed on a foundation of "practical Vedanta", using a monistic reading of yoga. Moreover, Yoga was seen as the technique for achieving unity of person with humanity, and of humanity with the universe. An important theme was that of a universal brotherhood, which resonated well with American and European middle and upper classes and suited the needs of emergent nationalism in India (pp. 132-3):

> ... the re-orientation of yoga by Vivekananda and others rested on an interpretation of an ancient and multifarious tradition which could explicitly address the problem of lack of freedom under colonial rule in such a way that no counterclaim would be possible. By creating a completely synthetic yoga system which incorporates anything and everything in its purview, with the added bonus of dual ratification by the norms of science and the authority of history, Vivekananda provided both Indians and others with a tool for reclaiming personal control against an otherwise relentless force of social and/or political domination. (Strauss 1997: 264)

Halbfass (1990: 228-242) claims that Vivekananda's work is often rhetorical and popularizing, reducing the complexity of especially classical Vedānta to simple formulas. Vivekananda's reinterpretation of Hinduism emphasizes ethics, social commitment, and national identity, merged into what he called "practical Vedānta"—a combination of ethics and metaphysics assembled by juxtaposing motives from various sources. The ambivalence and "improvisation" characteristic of Vivekananda's thought is clear when the secularization of the Vedāntic tradition is yearned for and yet also shunned: acting within the world is no longer primarily a means to a soteriological end but instead sought to fulfill worldly and social ends, yet entanglement in *saṃsāra* should also be avoided. Ethical action derives from the "metaphysical foundation" of according to the identity principle, the unity of all things, but also by utilitarian appeal to common sense. Indeed, the role of ethics is central for the self-understanding and self-articulation of modern Hindu thought.[60]

We will return to the issue whether or not modern Yoga, in the wake of Vivekananda and his teachings, represents a discontinuity in relation to the past. In any case, there is no doubt that he profoundly contributed to the history of Yoga, for better or for worse, and that he attempted a synthetic and highly idiosyncratic interpretation of Yoga and Vedānta philosophies. Especially the fusing of the latter two strands has in many ways lingered on with Vivekananda's successors, often contributing to a confusion in which any truly spiritual practice and any monistic philosophy similar to Vedānta is seen as part of Yoga history. Thus many so-called

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[60] This is not the place for an extensive analysis of Vivekananda's contributions. Nevertheless, in my view we should be wary of prematurely dismissing all of his work simply because of dubious methods and objectives. There can be no doubt that Vivekananda often produced major distortions of the history and development of Hinduism, whether intentionally or not, thus masking the truer extent of his re-interpretations. Also, his style of presentation considerably simplifies and generalizes multifaceted phenomena, reducing diversity to uniformity and dialogical processes to monological jargon. But there is no reason to reject his innovations altogether, *a priori* delegitimating any and all attempts to change, such as diverting from xenophobic history or claiming a "simpler" interpretation of otherwise complex phenomena. See Radice (1998) for a benevolent but nevertheless balanced and scholarly account of Vivekananda's contributions.

'Yoga masters' are in fact (neo)Vedānta propagators, only occasionally utilizing or referring to teachings and practices from classical and Haṭha Yoga.

There are several teachers and gurus contemporary with Vivekananda that contributed to the spreading of Yoga and Vedānta in the West, though often much less known and less influential. Swami Rama Tirtha (1873–1906), a former mathematics teacher, visited the United States in 1903 and stayed for about eighteen months, propagating his version of Vedānta monism, leaving behind a retreat center on Mount Shasta in California. Like Swami Vivekananda before him, he recommended the cultivation of clarity, work, morality, love, compassion, and, not least, self-discipline. Ananda Acharya (1881–1945) arrived in England in 1911, and three years later he relocated to Norway, where he taught until the end of his life. He had only a few students and lived quietly in a hermitage they had constructed for him, teaching them Vedānta and *jñāna-yoga*. In 1919, Yogendra Mastanami (then only twenty-two years old) visited New York for three years, demonstrating Haṭha Yoga, and established an American branch of the Kaivalyadhama, an Indian organization created by the late Swami Kuvalayananda. As the result of a meeting between Yogendra and Benedict Lust, the founder of naturopathy, Haṭha Yoga was for a decade or more presented to the American people as one of the alternative healing modalities pioneered by naturopaths.

Shivapuri Baba, Swami Rama Tirtha, Ananda Acharya, and Yogendra Mastanami did not leave any significant following. Swami Vivekananda, on the other hand, founded the successful Ramakrishna Mission in 1897, which continues to issue forth social programs based on "traditional spiritual values". But the yoga teacher who claimed the largest following during yoga's early days in the West was Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952). He arrived in the United States in 1920 and founded his Self-Realization Fellowship the same year. His widely read *Autobiography of a Yogi* announces a form of Kriya Yoga, purportedly based on the traditional teachings of yoga. Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda still have a good following even today, though largely giving way to modern Haṭha Yoga, especially the Krishnamacharya traditions.

Another important figure was Selvarajan Yesudian (1916–1998), the son of an Indian physician. In his youth Yesudian suffered from all kinds of illnesses, but through extended Haṭha Yoga practice he was able to overcome his frail constitution. He traveled to Hungary in 1936, where he became acquainted with Elisabeth Haich (1897–1994) and coauthored with her the popular *Sport and Yoga*, then immigrated to the United States in 1948. At about the same time, in 1947, Indra Devi (1899–2002), the first female student of T. Krishnamacharya, came to the United States and quickly became a successful yoga teacher in Hollywood. "Her three popular books had housewives from New Jersey to Texas standing on their heads in their bedrooms" (Hammond 2000). By the time she left for Argentina in 1982, she was known as "the First Lady of Yoga". In the '90s Haṭha Yoga received a boost through video presentations, such as those featuring Jane Fonda, Ali MacGraw, and Rodney Yee. A growing number of Hollywood personalities, including Sting and Madonna, as well as popular sports heroes, turned to yoga. This led to increased media attention, which, in turn, seems to have stimulated public interest even more.

> By the '70s you could find yoga and spiritual teachings everywhere. Near Santa Cruz, California, the silent sage Baba Hari Dass founded Mount Madonna to provide residential

yoga programs. In 1975 Pattabhi Jois made his first visit to the United States and set off the wildfire of Ashtanga-vinyasa Yoga. Around the same time, T.K.V. Desikachar, son of the great master Sri Krishnamacharya, brought his Viniyoga to the West. (Hammond 2000)

There are of course many more names that may be mentioned when studying how modern Yoga (and neo-Vedānta), coming in various forms and hybrids, was established in the West, such as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with his Transcendental Meditation; the Sikh master Yogi Bhajan, who was among the first to teach Kundalini Yoga to Westerners; Bhagavan Rajneesh (Osho), who mixed teachings from all sources and religions with practices of Tantric Yoga; Sri Aurobindo, the creator of Integral Yoga; Satya Sai Baba, well-known for his "miracles"; and Swami Nityananda and his disciple Swami Muktananda, who propagated Siddha-Yoga, a form of tantric Yoga. Here we will focus, however, on the two most popular branches of modern Haṭha Yoga, the lineages of Swami Shivananda and Krishnamacharya. In my view, an analysis of the Krishnamacharya traditions would largely benefit from a comparison with the Shivananda traditions, simply because they in many respects contrast each other on central issues, such as the role of the teacher, of physical practice, and in matters of religiosity.

2.8   THE SHIVANANDA TRADITIONS

Swāmi Śivānanda Saraswati (1887-1963), or simply Shivananda,[61] was born Kuppuswami Iyer in Tamil Nadu, south India. A former physician and medical doctor, he later renounced his practice and travelled to Rishikesh, where he was initiated in 1924 by Swami Vishwananda, a monk of the Saraswati branch of the Dasanami order. He founded the world-famous *Divine Life Society* (DLS) in 1936 and has authored numerous books.[62] He is regarded as a yogic giant of the 20th century, and his teachings have in many ways shaped the way Yoga is taught, both in India and elsewhere (Cushman & Jones 1998: 343). Strauss (1997: 103) notes that Eliade (1990) developed his famous interpretations of Yoga through the teachings of Shivananda, in turn heavily influencing how the Western world has understood Yoga. Even to this day many tourist offices and Government of India information offices direct foreigners to the "Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh" as the best place for learning Yoga (ibid: 106).

There is no doubt that Shivananda was heavily affected by the views of Vivekananda, though perhaps less overtly political. Both the DLS and the *Ramakrishna Mission* of Vivekananda assert the value of yoga as a universal science, emphasizing service in the world as a way to transcend it. Even the tension between universalist and nationalist positions is present in Shivananda's work (Strauss 1997: 123, 137). He viewed realization of the oneness of the Self with all other selves, the affirmation of universal brotherhood, as the key to both individual bliss and world

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[61] In popular usage his name is written "Sivananda". This, however, is an inappropriate transcription of the original Sanskrit "Śivānanda" and might lead to misunderstanding. Hence I have chosen "Shivananda" which lies closer to the original, though retaining the popular spelling in names of organizations and styles.

[62] Some claim anywhere between 200 and 300 books only in English! It seems that the more he has written the greater status is attributed the teachings. On the other hand, this also indicates the importance of print media in distributing and diffusing Yoga to the modern, predominantly Western, English-speaking and middle-class public.

peace. Following the lead of Vivekananda, Shivananda wanted to apply the teachings of yoga to the solution of practical problems (pp. 141-4).

As a medical doctor, Shivananda's orientation was toward the physical body and health. Associating Yoga primarily with physical health maintenance revealed an inclination toward tantric reverence for the body, though later, as his popularity increased with mainstream middle-classes, he would downplay the usage of tantric practices (Strauss 1997: 96- 9).

In the 1960s and 1970s, many swamis trained by Swami Shivananda opened their schools in Europe and North America. Among the most important are Vishnudevananda, Satchidananda, and Satyananda. Swami Vishnudevananda (1927-1993), also called Swami Vishnu, was born in Kerala and became a monk and disciple of Shivananda in 1947. With Shivananda's consent, he travelled to the west in 1958, and established the *Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centers*, headquartered in Montreal and purportedly one of the largest networks of yoga schools in the world.[63] Vishnudevananda was a showman, and in the late 1960's he became known as the "flying swami", dropping flowers and leaflets with prayers for world peace along the Berlin Wall. At times criticized for an extreme market orientation within his organization, he was perhaps the first of the "export gurus" to develop the concept of a "yoga vacation" (Strauss 1997: 231). According to Strauss, Vishnudevananda best exemplifies the commodification of yoga, Indian spirituality and the guru in the world market, using the ideology of spirituality to simultaneously advance and mask interests (p. 232).[64]

Vishnudevananda condensed, or rather reinterpreted, classical Yoga into a five-point program. His so-called "Sivananda Yoga" was especially well known and popular during the 1960's and 70's, thus being centrally important in the process of bringing Haṭha Yoga into Western culture (Garrett 1999: 95).

Swami Satchidananda (1914-2002) received monkhood in 1949 as Shivananda's disciple. In 1966, he made his first global tour, sponsored by an American devotee. The Integral Yoga Institutes were founded under his direction, rapidly spreading throughout the world. He later founded the Yogaville Ashram in Virginia. Satchidananda developed what he called "Integral Yoga", which aims to integrate the various aspects of the body-mind through a combination of postures, breathing techniques, deep relaxation, and meditation. This practice is very similar to Vishnudevananda's "Sivananda Yoga".[65]

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, born 1923, met Shivananda in Rishikesh 1943 and left him in 1955 to live as a wandering mendicant. He founded the *International Yoga Fellowship* in 1963 and established the well-known *Bihar School of Yoga* the year after. He has authored numerous books (supposedly over 80), and has disciples around the world. He was also reputed to have sexually harassed female students and to have been involved in shady money dealings (Strauss 1997: 237). Satyananda teaches in a more Tantric tradition than other schools in the Shivananda lineage, including guided visualizations and so-called "kriyas"—integrated sequences of postures, breathing exercises, seals (*mudra*), and locks (*bandha*) (see Satyananda 1996).

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[63] According to Holly Hammond's article "Yoga's Trip to America" in Yoga Journal (at http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/467_1.cfm).
[64] For a study of the political dimensions of Shivananda and the DLS, see McKean (1996, chps 7-9).
[65] See website of *Integral Yoga International* at http://www.yogaville.org

Apparently he was initiated by a female adept in Tantric Yoga prior to studying with Shivananda (Cushman & Jones 1998: 89). The practices that are now taught at the Bihar School were largely developed by Satyananda himself, modified to suit modern practitioners, and based on hints and references in old tantric texts, as well as on classical Yoga and modern scientific research. The ʺsignature practiceʺ of the school is *yoga nīdra*, a guided, supine meditation in which the body is progressively relaxed and awareness withdrawn from the external world; a state in which it is possible to remove unwanted habits and tendencies, also receiving information from the unconscious (ibid: 90).[66]

William Garrett (1999: 103-116) notes that, on the whole, the Shivananda lineage is a monastic tradition, rooted in yoga ashrams or communities. Daily life in these ashrams is typically rigorous, with many requirements and rules about behavior, dress, and personal habits. There is often a tangible emphasis on philosophy, traditional texts being regularly studied. The physical setting is generally religious in atmosphere, with altars and ordained clothing being customary, and there is less social interaction between the practitioners than in many other modern Yoga traditions. Traditional rituals and practices are frequent, such as dietary regimes, cleansing practices, service, celebrations on auspicious days, religious ceremonies and offerings, and group chanting rituals. A regular, long-term meditation training is more highly valued than physical challenge, and the primary purpose of postures and breathing exercises is only to prepare for meditation.

Strauss argues that Shivananda largely reinterpreted Yoga in terms of a movement from passive to active orientations:

> … from emancipation, or release from domination, to freedom to do what the individual wanted; from absence of disease to a complete state of mental, physical and social well-being, an individual in control of her life; from release from the bonds of <u>samsara </u>to the freedom of self-possession, bringing with it "peace of mind" in a "healthy" person, whose "self-control" to pursue desired ends, whatever they may be, makes her an ideal world citizen. (Strauss 1997: 109)

Shivananda viewed shared action as more important than belief (ibid: 133). This "translocal community of practice" includes both the set of physical practices embodying a particular ideology—postures, rituals, prayers, etc.—as well as the set of maintenance practices associated with teaching, critiquing, and promoting those core physical practices, for example teachings styles and techniques, literary conventions, organizational development, etc. (p. 141).

> The yoga-oriented community of practice associated with Sivananda and his disciples is a fluid group of individuals who recognize in each other certain commonalities of value orientation and of self-selected physical practice which predispose them to feeling comfortable in each other's company, much as members of a particular national class share enough of a habitus to afford them group identification and solidarity. (Strauss 1997: 207)

Strauss (1997: 203-5) notes that there are important differences between Indian and Western practitioners in the Shivananda traditions. For Hindu Indians, Yoga practices are usually embedded in a sense of familial or national belonging, identifying Yoga as derived from their own pasts, nostalgically imagined or actual. Belonging to a community of practice based on yoga means "to stay anchored in

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[66] Also see website of *Satyananda Yoga* at http://www.satyananda.net

tradition, regardless whether that "tradition" has been reformulated as a secular or public strategy for health maintenance and freedom from stress, instead of a religious practice for the attainment of release from suffering in the world" (p. 204). For Westerners, on the other hand, yoga means to "find oneself", to be anchored in a rapidly deterritorializing society, and to connect with a global community, not a local or national one (p. 204).

2.9   THE KRISHNAMACHARYA TRADITIONS

Krishnamacharya was one of the most influential figures during the twentieth century, laying the foundation for much of what is now popularly called 'Yoga' in the Western world. In fact, Yoga's resurgence in India owes a great deal to his many lecture tours and demonstrations during the 1930s, and his disciples have played a huge role in popularizing yoga in the West (Ruiz 2001). His most famous students are Pattābhi Jois (b. 1915), the founder of Ashtanga (Vinyasa) Yoga, B. K. S. Iyengar (b. 1918), who developed Iyengar Yoga, and his son T.K.V. Desikachar (b. 1939), who now teaches in the style of Viniyoga. Many contemporary yoga teachers have trained in the Iyengar, Ashtanga, or Viniyoga styles before developing another method, others have borrowed from Krishnamacharya-based forms. Krishnamacharya's influence can be seen most clearly in the emphasis on and development of physical postures (*āsana*) that has become the signature of Yoga today. It has been said that Krishanamacharya is responsible for the modern emphasis on the headstand and the shoulderstand; a pioneer in refining postures, sequencing them and ascribing therapeutic value to specific postures. By combining breath and posture, he viewed the postures as an integral part of developing meditation instead of just a preparatory step.[67]

Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989) was born in a village in the state of Mysore, in a Vaiṣṇava Brahmin family. According to biographical notes Krishnamacharya made near the end of his life, his father initiated him into yoga at age five, when he began to teach him the *Yogasūtra* and told him that their family had descended from a revered ninth-century yogi, Nāthamuni.[68] In another manuscript, Krishnamacharya wrote that "while still an urchin", he learned 24 *āsanas* from a swami of the Śṛṅgeri Maṭh. At age 16 he is reported to have made a pilgrimage to Nāthamuni's shrine at Alvar Tirunagari, where he is supposed to have encountered his legendary forefather during an extraordinary vision. In this vision, Nāthamuni sang verses to him from the *Yogarahasya* ('The Secret Doctrine of Yoga'), a text supposedly lost more than a thousand years before. Krishnamacharya claims that he

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[67] The following biography of Krishnamacharya, and his most important students, is primarily based on the accounts from Desikachar (1995), Ruiz (2001), Cushman & Jones (1998), and Sjoman (1999).

[68] Nāthamuni (ca. tenth century CE) was the first teacher (*ācārya*) revered by the southern Tamil tradition of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, of which Rāmānuja would later become its most famous exponent. Though his emotional and aesthetic inspiration came from the Āl̲vārs, Tamil poet-saints, his main intellectual inheritance was the Sanskrit philosophical tradition, particularly Vedānta (Flood 1996: 136). Feuerstein (1998) mentions that "some scholars identify him with Shrî Nâtha, the author of several works, including the *Yoga-Rahasya*" (p. 383), as does Krishnamacharya. 'Nāth' is an old name for 'Lord', often denoting Śiva, and various Śaiva groups (Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas, and Śāktas) were also called Nāths (White 1996: 99).

memorized and later transcribed these verses, and that many elements of his teachings can be found in this text.[69]

As a young man, Krishnamacharya studied several classical Indian disciplines, first Vedic texts and rituals in Mysore, at the age of eighteen moving to Banaras, where he studied Sanskrit, logic and grammar, and again back in Mysore, where he learned Vedānta. He would later attempt to integrate all these studies into his yoga teachings. A university teacher, Ganganath Jha, is claimed to have advised him to seek out a master called Ramamohan Brahmachari, apparently one of the few remaining Haṭha Yoga masters, who lived in a remote cave near Lake Manasarovar in the Tibetan Himalayas. By Krishnamacharya's own account he spent seven years, from 1916 onwards, with this teacher, memorizing the *Yogasūtra*, learning *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, and studying the therapeutic aspects of yoga. During his apprenticeship, Krishnamacharya claimed that he developed special powers, such as stopping his pulse. In exchange for instruction, Brahmachari asked his student to return home to teach yoga and establish a household. Apparently he wanted Krishnamacharya to learn about family life and teach a yoga that benefited the modern householder.

In 1931 Krishnamacharya received an invitation to teach at the Sanskrit College in Mysore, teaching yoga full time, supported by the ruling family of Mysore. This family had already patronized Haṭha Yoga for more than a century, and their library housed one of the oldest illustrated *āsana* compilations now known, the *Śrītattvanidhi* (Sjoman 1999). For the next two decades, the Mahārāja of Mysore helped Krishnamacharya promote yoga throughout India, financing demonstrations and publications. It was also the Mahārāja who paid for a 1930's film of Krishnamacharya's students Iyengar and Jois as teenagers demonstrating *āsanas*— apparently the earliest footage of yogis in action (Cushman 1999). Being a diabetic, the Maharaja felt especially drawn to the connection between yoga and healing, and Krishnamacharya devoted much of his time to developing this link. At this time he wrote his first book, the *Yoga Makarandam*. He also sought to popularize yoga by demonstrating the supernormal powers (*siddhi*) he had acquired earlier. In 1939 and 1940 he was visited by a French medical team who wanted to verify that he could deliberately stop his heartbeat, a demonstration that he reluctantly undertook to validate yoga in the eyes of a skeptical science (Desikachar 1995: 220).

Later Krishnamacharya was offered the palace's gymnastics hall as his own yoga school. From around 1930 until the late 1940s, during his teaching at the new school, Krishnamacharya is said to have developed what is now known as Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga (*aṣṭāṅga-vinyāsa-yoga*). He drew on many disciplines—including yoga, gymnastics, and Indian wrestling—to develop dynamically performed *āsana* sequences aimed at building physical fitness (Sjoman 1999). This style uses the movements of Sun Salutation (*sūrya-namaskār*) to lead into and out of each posture. Each movement is coordinated with prescribed breathing and 'gaze points' (*dṛṣṭi*)

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[69]Available in an English "translation" (*Yogarahasya*, translated by T.K.V. Desikachar, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, 1998). This publication has not been available to me at the moment. Balasubramaniam (2000: 212) argues that the style and contents of Desikachar's publication seems to be quite modern. Moreover, in the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* (HSC) the verses quoted from *Yogarahasya* are not to be found in the version published by Desikachar. In the HSC, *Yogarahasya* is referred to at two occasions, attributed once to Dattātreya and once to Nāthamuni. This would mean that there are at least two texts by this name, both of which are apparently lost.

that focus the eyes and should ideally instill meditative concentration. Eventually, Krishnamacharya standardized the pose sequences into three series consisting of primary, intermediate, and advanced āsanas. This has recently become one of the most popular styles of yoga in the West, mostly due to the work of Pattābhi Jois. Ruiz (2001) speculates that the popularity of this method, originally designed for youngsters, is perhaps because it is particularly well suited to "our high-energy, outwardly-focused culture".

Krishnamacharya is said to have enjoyed the challenge of presenting yoga to people of different backgrounds. On the frequent tours he called 'propaganda trips', he introduced yoga to British soldiers, Muslim maharājas, and Indians of all religious beliefs. Krishnamacharya claimed that yoga could serve any creed, which would later become a hallmark of the Krishnamacharya Yoga traditions, and perhaps yet another reason for its rapid spreading today. The first student to bring his yoga onto the world stage was a Western woman, a friend of the Mysore royal family, who became known as Indra Devi (1899–2002, born Zhenia Labunskaia in Riga, pre-Soviet Latvia). At first Krishnamacharya refused to teach her, but Devi persisted. Although she studied with Krishnamacharya during the Mysore period, the yoga Indra Devi came to teach was more individualized and gentle, perhaps foreshadowing the teachings that Krishnamacharya would develop in later years. As with Jois, she combined breathing exercises with postures, also adding a devotional aspect to practice. Devi eventually wrote the first best-selling book on Haṭha Yoga, *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (1953), and founded a school in Shanghai, where Madame Chiang Kai-Shek became one of her students. Eventually, by convincing Soviet leaders that yoga was not a religion, she even opened the doors to yoga in the Soviet Union, where it had previously been illegal. In 1947 she moved to the United States. Living in Hollywood, she became known as the "First Lady of Yoga", attracting celebrity students like Marilyn Monroe. Her impact in the United States waned when she moved to Argentina in 1985, but her prestige in Latin America extends well beyond the yoga community, also after her death in 2002.

During the period when he was instructing Devi and Jois, Krishnamacharya also briefly taught his brother-in-law B.K.S. Iyengar, who would come to play perhaps the most significant role of anyone in bringing Haṭha Yoga to the West. It is hard to know just how much Krishnamacharya's training affected Iyengar's later development. Though intense, Iyengar's tenure with his teacher lasted barely a year. In any case, some of the characteristics for which Iyengar's yoga is noted are similar to those Krishnamacharya developed in his later work. Iyengar's contributions would include precisely detailed, systematic articulation of each *āsana*, research into therapeutic applications, and a multi-tiered, rigorous training system. He would slowly modify and adapt postures to meet his students' needs, largely abandoning his mentor's sequence (*vinyāsa*) style of practice and learning to use props to help less advanced students. Iyengar's emphasis on *āsana* did not always please his former teacher, who at one point is reported to have suggested that it was time for Iyengar to focus more on meditation. All the time Iyengar's reputation would continue to grow, and by the 1960s he was regarded as one of the chief ambassadors of Yoga.

Patronage ended for Krishnamacharya's school when India gained their independence and the politicians who replaced the royal family of Mysore had little interest in Yoga. Krishnamacharya struggled to maintain the school, but in 1950 it

closed. He eventually left Mysore, accepting a teaching position at Vivekananda College in Chennai (Madras). New students slowly appeared, including people from all walks of life and in varying states of health, and Krishnamacharya attempted new ways to teach them. He now focused on adapting postures to each student's capacity. As students progressed, Krishnamacharya began stressing not just more advanced *āsanas* but also the spiritual aspects of Yoga. He maintained that every *āsana* should be seen as an act of devotion and lead toward inner calm. Similarly, emphasis on the breath was meant to convey spiritual implications along with physiological benefits. Krishnamacharya would also introduce Vedic chanting into yoga practice.

This approach, which is now usually referred to as Viniyoga, became the hallmark of Krishnamacharya's teaching during his final decades. During the years of tutoring his son Desikachar, Krishnamacharya continued to refine the Viniyoga approach. He came to divide Yoga practice into three stages representing youth, middle, and old age: First, develop muscular power and flexibility; second, maintain health during the years of working and raising a family; finally, go beyond the physical practice to focus on God.[70]

In my view, Krishnamacharya may appropriately be understood as a reformer. He purged Haṭha Yoga of its more noticeable tantric and alchemical traces, at least doctrinally, leaving only some of the practices as part of a partly different framework. This framework especially involves a return to Upaniṣadic themes and to classical Yoga. As such, his work, extended through his students, may be interpreted as part of an on-going and constantly evolving transition, moving between and repositioning amongst various thematic tensions built into the history of Yoga. Consequently, Krishnamacharya's influence cannot be understood simply in terms of neo-Hinduism and Western influence, but must be understood in terms of several overlapping developments and reinterpretations.

First of all there is a clear emphasis on the importance of the *Yogasūtra*. All Krishnamacharya's major students refer to the *Yogasūtra* in their teachings as the fundamental text for Yoga practice and philosophy, only occasionally referring to other texts such as the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*. This entails that important haṭhayogic texts are primarily seen as auxiliary instruments to understanding and perfecting classical Yoga as presented by Patañjali. At the same time, however, there is also an

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[70] Gary Kraftsow (2002), one of Desikachar's foremost students and director of the American Viniyoga Institute (www.viniyoga.com), aligns these with the Brahmanical system of life-stages (*āśrama*). The first stage is the *brahmacāri* phase, what he calls the student or primary development phase. This emphasizes education and *āsana* for the growth and development of the body. The second phase is the householder (*gṛhasta*), where the intention shifts so that postures become practices in the service of *prāṇāyāma.* The methodology is here adapted to promote stability at every level. Finally, with the renunciate phase (*sannyāsin*) the intention again shifts, so that postures and breathing are practiced in the service of meditation and prayer. (Kraftsow also refers to these as *śṛṣṭikrama, sthitikrama* and *layakrama* respectively. I have not been able to verify from where these latter notions stem from, though he describes them as part of "classical Hindu thought".) Interestingly, Kraftsow leaves out the third stage of *āśrama*, the so-called *vanaprastha* or 'forest-dweller', in which austerity and bodily asceticism should be practiced in the forest. Also, he does not mention the traditional connection with Vedic rituals as well as the link to orthodox Hindu classes (*varṇa*), and the strict rule of celibacy during the first phase. In fact, all the more religious and theological connotations are conspicuously missing. In my view, Kraftsow attempts a creative appropriation of traditional ideas, though unfortunately not mentioning, or perhaps intentionally leaving out, material inappropriate for modern life and Western values.

element of Vedāntization, evinced by turning to the "authority" of the Upaniṣads, but also witnessed in descriptions of the soul and the world that are to a significant degree influenced by nondualist philosophy. This is not surprising, considering the status of Advaita Vedānta, or various versions thereof, in modern India. In my view, these interpretations are also noticeably influenced by what has been called neo-Vedānta, in which, among other things, social responsibility is emphasized. Further inquiries should focus on how and to what extent interpretations of the *Yogasūtra* in these traditions are in fact affected by neo-Vedānta or other traditions of thought. In any case, Vivekānanda and other representatives of neo-Hinduism do clearly not have such a great influence on this lineage as they do compared to the Shivananda traditions.

Second, goals and practices of Haṭha or Rāja Yoga are often situated within a therapeutic framework, as witnessed especially in the teachings of Desikachar (1995). Sometimes Yoga is even coupled with traditional Indian medicine, the Āyurveda (Fields 1994). The rhetoric of "scientific observation" has a different status in these traditions compared to other modern Yoga traditions, drawing more on anatomical and medical research to 'prove' the efficiency of Yoga postures and breathing exercises in dealing with both physical and mental ailments.

Third, the role of postures is clearly reinterpreted as compared to older Haṭha Yoga traditions. In Jois's Ashtanga Yoga, *āsana* (with *prāṇāyāma* as an integral part of it) is often viewed as a means to "realizing" or "perfecting" the other limbs, whereas Iyengar apparently believes that meditation must be practiced for realizing *samādhi*, but only after having reached a very advanced level (and having perfected *prāṇāyāma* as well). In Iyengar's views we also detect a devotional aspect in Yoga practice in which the body is seen as a temple and *āsana* as a form of prayer. In Viniyoga 'spiritual' aspects are generally introduced earlier, typically emphasizing the use also of other practices, such as chanting and meditation. *Āsana* is usually practiced continuously throughout an individual's development, but does not form quite such a fundamental focus as in the other styles. On the whole, tantric and ritual aspects are transformed, or even suppressed, within a comparatively secularized and laicized approach which downplays the individual's requirement of religious faith or conviction. Though perhaps a few tantric traces from the origins of Haṭha Yoga may be found, especially in the emphasis on bodily perfection and experience, as well as the reinterpretations of renunciation, the Krishnamacharya traditions on the whole are considerably closer to Rāja Yoga—a neo-Classical form of Yoga which utilizes practices from Haṭha Yoga traditions and repositions them within a framework of Vedānticized Classical Yoga.

The rhetoric of "experientialism" also differs from other contemporary traditions, involving comparatively less utilization of religio-mystical garb, such as realizing 'spirit' or 'God' within. Ashtanga, Iyengar and Viniyoga draw more on notions of individual fulfillment within a less overtly religious ambiance, although they do occasionally refer to more "personal" religious ideals when explicating the ultimate goals. In general, devotion (*bhakti*) and love are not highlighted in daily

practice, for the most part only mentioned in connection with the goals and philosophy of Yoga.[71]

In the teachings of Iyengar, Desikachar and Jois, the role of paranormal powers (*siddhi*) is significantly down-played, most often not even mentioned, despite that they have been devoted a whole chapter in the *Yogasūtra*. This may perhaps be due to a secularization or de-mystification of Yoga, in order to avoid criticism from scientifically influenced world-views. Garrett (1999: 111) claims that there are in fact no reports in the Krishnamacharya traditions of anyone having paranormal powers. This is not however true. As we have seen, early in his career Krishnamacharya is said to have demonstrated such powers to stimulate interest in Yoga, though perhaps reluctantly.

According to Garrett (1999: 103), the most important difference compared to the Shivananda traditions is that the Krishnamacharya lineage is a householder, or lay, tradition. The mood also tends to be more social compared to Shivananda traditions, though depending of course on the social dynamics of the students and the behavior of the teacher. There are a variety of relationships to the teacher, although the role of a realized spiritual master is nearly non-existent. The term 'guru' generally refers more to a relationship of great affection and appreciation, rather than total spiritual surrender. Iyengar's role as a teacher is more that of a fierce, demanding coach who elicits great appreciation and respect, similar to his own experience with Krishnamacharya as a teacher. With Desikachar the teacher's role seems to be more a mixture of the role of coach and trusted mentor, emphasizing trust, friendliness, respect, and the need to cultivate an individual relationship with each student. Jois's role is primarily that of a coach, generally emphasizing the importance of self-practice, though the teacher's personality may play a role in motivating the student on a long-term basis (Garrett 1999: 112-3). In general, in daily practice emphasis is almost exclusively on postures and breathing techniques, down-playing the role of ritual, ceremony, service, dietary regimes, and so on. Often, however, other practices are important to the private lives of senior teachers, and may be introduced to advanced students, perhaps especially so in Viniyoga. Desikachar for example places great value on chanting, and sometimes advanced students in all three styles will adopt vegetarian diets, as well as occasionally cultivate an interest in scriptural study, especially in Iyengar and Viniyoga (pp. 113-4).

In Ashtanga and Iyengar Yoga, visual and verbal communication is minimized and great faith is placed in the power of the practical aspects of yoga, whereas in Viniyoga, communication is matched to each student's unique situation (Garrett 1999: 104-5). In Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga the style of practice is physically very challenging, and consequently the mental challenge can also be quite significant, whereas in Viniyoga it is bound to vary from person to person. Practice in postures and breathing exercises is usually seen as preparing for meditation to naturally arise. In Viniyoga, however, meditation is more often practiced concomitantly with postures and breathing exercises, even with less advanced students, whereas in

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[71] In my view, this seems to be overlooked by many practitioners, even at an advanced level, who often continue to propagate that 'Yoga' can be practiced irrespectively of one's (non-)faith. There are few overt references, especially in Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga classes, to the higher aims of yoga, typically focusing on perfection of the postures and breathing. Nevertheless, the teachers themselves, to be sure, have clear conceptions of what the practice should aspire to, and in fact results in.

Ashtanga and Iyengar Yoga, thoroughly practicing the preparatory steps paves the way for meditation, and the last limbs of Patañjali's Yoga are said sprout spontaneously from the first four (ibid: 116). According to *Yoga Journal* writer Richard Rosen,

> the Krishnamacharya-Pattabhi Jois system is indeed modeled on the eight limbs of Patanjali; the emphasis, however, is on the correct performance of the third limb (posture) as a means of realizing *all* the limbs, including, of course, samadhi. Since we in the West sometimes focus exclusively on posture and overlook the other limbs, [the Ashtanga teacher] Richard [Freeman] believes that Pattabhi Jois calls his system 'Ashtanga' in part 'to encourage his students to look into the whole practice more deeply' and integrate all the limbs.[72]

Only a few of the many postures practiced in the Krishnamacharya traditions are described in older Yoga texts. The *Yogasūtra* mentions no poses at all, other than the seated meditation posture, whereas the *Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā* lists 15, most of them variations of the cross-legged sitting position, for which it gives very sketchy instructions. Several traditional texts on Haṭha Yoga eschew mention of postures altogether, focusing instead on the subtle energy systems and chakras that the poses both reflect and influence. Conspicuously missing are the standing poses and Sun Salutations that form the backbone of most contemporary systems. In fact, the modern emphases on precision of alignment, physical fitness, and therapeutic effects may in large part be seen as twentieth-century innovations (Cushman 1999).

It does not seem to be the case, however, that Krishnamacharya invented postures on his own. Norman Sjoman (1999) presents a translation and study of the yoga section of the afore-mentioned *Śrītattvanidhi*, a compendium of classical information compiled in the 1800s by Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar in the Mysore Palace, a member of the same royal family that a century later would become the patron of yoga master Krishnamacharya. The Yoga section includes instructions for and illustrations of 122 postures—making it by far the most elaborate text on *āsanas* in existence before the twentieth century. Sjoman argues that the detailed instructions and illustrations for physical maneuvers quickly found their way into Krishnamacharya's teachings, and were then passed on to his students. The *Śrītattvanidhi* depicts dozens of poses that are found in Iyengar's teachings and practiced as part of the Ashtanga Vinyasa series, but that do not show up in any older texts. It is also listed as a resource in the bibliography of Krishnamacharya's very first book on yoga, published in the early 1930s.

But while the *Śrītattvanidhi* extends the written history of the āsanas a hundred years further back than has previously been documented, it does not support the popular myth of a monolithic, unchanging tradition of yoga poses. Rather, Sjoman claims that the yoga section of the *Śrītattvanidhi* is itself clearly a compilation, drawing on techniques from a wide range of disparate traditions. In addition to variations on poses from earlier yogic texts, it also includes rope exercises used by Indian wrestlers and the *daṇḍa* push-ups developed at indigenous Indian gymnasiums. In the twentieth century, these push-ups begin to show up as part of the Sun Salutation, presented in a rudimentary form in the *Śrītattvanidhi*. These physical techniques are now for the first time given yogic names, incorporated into the body of yogic knowledge. In turn, says Sjoman, Krishnamacharya drew on the

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[72] See *Yoga Journal* at http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/188_1.cfm (viewed Oct 2002).

Śrītattvanidhi and blended it with a number of other sources. Krishnamacharya's first writings also featured *vinyāsa* (sequences of poses synchronized with the breath) that Krishnamacharya said he had learned from his yoga teacher in Tibet. Moreover, he also seems to have incorporated specific techniques drawn from British gymnastics. In addition to being a patron of yoga, the Mysore royal family was also a patron of gymnastics. In the early 1900s, they hired a British gymnast to teach the young princes. When Krishnamacharya started his yoga school the former palace gymnastics hall was complete with wall ropes and other gymnastic aids, which Krishnamacharya used as yoga props (there is a photo of this room in Sjoman's book, p. 110). He was also given access to the Western gymnastics manual written by the Mysore Palace gymnasts.

2.10 CONCLUSION

As is by now apparent, the history of Yoga is a complex and multifaceted one. Moreover, modern Haṭha Yoga traditions, especially the Krishnamacharya traditions, draw on its many various themes and elements in different ways, through combination, hybridization, exclusion, suppression, reformation and reinter-pretation. In fact, the major representatives of the Krishnamacharya traditions refer to all the texts and tradition-strands mentioned above, although to different degrees and ways. To further complicate things, confrontation with modernity, colonization and the Western world has also significantly influenced the manner in which these traditions continue to change and position themselves. In other words, to analyze how and in what ways modern Haṭha Yoga represents both a continuity as well as an alteration in comparison with its historical background, it is necessary to hold to a perspective which does not narrowly focus on only some of these aspects, and which nevertheless allows for a clearer understanding and not just a chaotic assembly of a myriad of events, discourses, symbols and practices.

In my view, one way of doing this is to adopt a dialogical perspective, which departs from a particular theme or element but simultaneously acknowledges the presence of complementary and/or opposing strands that stand in a more or less tension-ridden relationship to the element focused on. This might entail a decon-struction of purportedly authoritative discourses—an analysis of what is presented as being 'ancient' or 'authentic'—in order to uncover other potential interpretations and to excavate hidden multiplicities.

Often modern Haṭha Yoga is presented in terms of either/or. *Either* it represents a continuity with the traditions that precede it, *or* it has profoundly altered the route of Yoga, more or less disconnected from the past. At other times, interpretations focus on exclusivity. Modern Haṭha Yoga is then described as consisting of a set of features which are more or less unrelated to that which lies outside of its domains. But taking a closer look at its historical background, we realize that many themes and elements were often developed and presented already in the past, albeit in different contexts and forms. The dialogical approach, it is argued, allows for an analysis which acknowledges the historical existence of the many elements, yet also focuses on how these are reinterpreted and repositioned within a field of tensions. As such, the dialogical approach is conducted more in terms of "both/and". It views the theoretical and practical resources of Haṭha Yoga as being *both* present in the past, in some sense, *and* continuously reinterpreted.

This is not to say that Krishnamacharya did not introduce new elements, especially regarding *āsana* practice, but only that the way these are interpreted, in historical and philosophical terms, to some degree connects to already present issues. British gymnastics is certainly outside the scope of Yoga history, but if one brings them into *āsana* practice, *in what sense* can they then become part of Yoga and not be deemed as a forever alien phenomenon? Many scholars and practitioners rarely specify what is actually meant when something is seen as being 'new', being an alteration or innovation, or conversely as 'traditional'. The dialogical approach attempts to do precisely this, to analyze in what ways something may be seen as novel and yet relate to the past. A 'new' element may be brought in from another tradition or cultural dynamic and then be superimposed upon or partly merging with its new surroundings. The purpose of analysis is then to discern in what ways this superimposition or blending actually interacts with its new environment.

I will argue for an analysis that views various beliefs and practices as being situated within a continuous dialogue. This is to balance often simplistic accounts of modern spirituality that tend to overly emphasize change and discontinuity, and according to which Yoga traditions are viewed in their modern derivatives as "products" of globalization, Westernization, modernity, homogenization, or some such process. A dialogical analysis should avoid taking such processes as a final or complete explanation, though nevertheless acknowledging the value of recognizing how the conditions or circumstances have changed human life during the last centuries. On the other hand, many apologetic accounts tend to exaggerate continuity, often naming it "ancient" and giving the impression of age-old, unaltered truths that are left untouched through time and space. The dialogical approach is critical also of such accounts.

I will claim that modern Haṭha Yoga, as indeed any tradition, is a highly flexible formation that adopts and changes with the circumstances, often subjugating multiplicity and heterogeneity, both within the tradition itself as well as in relation to those who are viewed as outsiders. The remaining chapters of this study will thus be dedicated to establish a tentative version of how such a dialogical approach might look, and how it might be implemented in an analysis of the history of Yoga.

3 PERSPECTIVES

3.1 BAKHTIN'S DIALOGISM

Loosely interpreted, dialogism may denote any approach that in some way focuses on the idea of dialogue, whether in language, inter-subjectivity, selfhood, interpretation of texts, identity, or otherwise. In a more narrow sense, however, the notion is often associated with the philosophy of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), known for his work on Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel and on the medieval carnival. The term 'dialogism' was not used by Bakhtin himself but may be considered as a useful device to summarize the different ways he meditated on dialogue. To be sure, *dialogue* is the master key to the assumptions that guided his work throughout his career (Holquist 1990: 15).[73]

According to Bakhtin, dialogue marks the existential condition of humanity because to exist means to communicate dialogically.[74] In this context, dialogue is a special sort of interaction, not to be equated simply with argument or a conversation. This interaction entails that neither individual nor social entities, being process-oriented in nature, are trapped within their boundaries. They are, so to speak, partially located outside themselves. To the individual person this manifests as a form of liminality; there is simply no sovereign internal territory, we are always on the boundary, looking "inside" of ourselves as well as into another. Similarly, cultural entities are also all boundary, resembling oscillating fields, "a play of force lines rather than an assembly of objects", and shot through with multiple temporali-

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[73] Bakhtin's dialogism may be seen as part of what has been called the 'interpretive turn' (Bohman et al 1991), thus to a significant extent overlapping with the hermeneutic tradition. Though Bakhtin undoubtedly places a premium on language, he rejects the preoccupations with the structure of language, word-world relationships, and the analysis of meaning that can be said to constitute the so-called 'linguistic turn' (ibid). He moreover vehemently opposes the different forms of radical contextualism or relativism that seem to result from not taking interpretation as a fundamentally dialogical situation. Apparently Bakhtin worked quite independently from contemporary developments in Continental and Anglo-American philosophy: "No clear evidence exists demonstrating that Bakhtin was influenced significantly by philosophers such as Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Quine, who were writing at roughly the same time Bakhtin was writing. … Nonetheless, remarkable similarities exist between Bakhtin's conception of language and the conception of language held by these philosophers, which makes Bakhtin's work all the more remarkable" (Bohman et al 1991: 283). There are of course many other individuals and traditions working with similar ideas. Levinas and Buber may be regarded as sharing similar perspectives to Bakhtin (Gardiner 1996), as do Mead, Wittgenstein, Vygotsky, and various feminist writers (Sampson 1993: 98), the hermeneutic tradition, with names such as Gadamer and Ricoeur (Gardiner 1992), as well as Taylor (1985, 1989) and Merleau-Ponty. In any case, this study is primarily inspired by Bakhtin's thought, though loosely interpreted and unsystematically adapted for specific purposes and contexts.

[74] In the following I have relied heavily on Morson & Emerson (1990). This is because I agree with their approach to the issue of disputed texts. In short, they claim that the texts signed by Voloshinov and Medvedev are in fact theirs, though perhaps influenced by Bakhtin in many instances. This results in a slightly different understanding of Bakhtin's views than is common, not least of language and psychology. I have however also drawn from the works of Holquist (1990), Flood (1999), Gardiner (1992, 1996), Bell & Gardiner (1998) and several others. I have refrained from using Bakhtin's own material due to the lack of both space and time.

ties and diverse rhythms (Morson & Emerson 1990: 50-2). Conceived as such, dialogue involves the constant redefinition of its participants, relentlessly developing and creating new potentials so that no single interaction could exhaust the value of future exchanges.

This is but one sense of the term 'dialogue'. According to Morson & Emerson (1990: 130-1), Bakhtin used it in at least three distinct senses: as a view of truth and the world (the above sense), as a defining quality of language itself (according to which every utterance is by definition dialogic), and as a particular use of language (which means that some utterances may be non-dialogic).[75] The distinction between the latter two is important, since to assert that language itself is dialogic does not exclude that use of language may be more or less dialogic *in another sense*. To say that a particular utterance or representation is 'monologic' is still compatible with the idea that it may be dialogic at a more fundamental level of analysis. Indeed, a word, discourse, language, or culture undergo 'dialogization' when they become relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same thing. By contrast, a monologic discourse or utterance attempts to be authoritative or absolute, ignoring dialogic conditions; it is a discourse that "negates heterology by reducing it to the homology of an unchanging tradition" (Faure 1993: 9).[76]

Central to Bakhtin's conception of language is the idea of *utterance,* a unit of "speech communication", which differs from a simple linguistic sentence. The utterance occurs in a specific situation, formulated as part of a dialogic exchange and shaped in anticipation of a response. It is determined by a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers. Someone must say it to someone, must respond to something, and accomplish something by the saying of it. Utterances are unrepeatable because even verbally identical utterances never mean the same thing since the context is never the same. The social context and intonation are always important because utterances have the quality of addressivity, reaching out towards an answer, and because every speech act assumes the existence of other utterances and preceding dialogues. Everything is in a sense already spoken about so that utterances orient themselves dialogically to earlier utterances on the topic. Moreover, any utterance must be interpreted as a response from a specific location, always adding something new, though of course to greater or lesser degrees.

The dialogic relations of utterances are not reducible to logical or linguistic ones because a similar utterance carries with it a different experience that leads to different implications. For example, tone is often crucial to meaning. Complexities of meaning thus arise from the diversity of orientations to previous utterances, and there is an internal dialogism of words and utterances, the 'already-spoken-about', the elements of reported speech that are present in every utterance or what Kristeva

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[75] To this we might add 'dialogue' in the ordinary sense of the word, as a conversation between two or more people or equivalent to a "compositionally expressed dialogue" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 49).

[76] On the face of it, it might seem odd to claim the universality of dialogue, as a truth or model of the world. But in my opinion it is in fact not as contradictory as it seems, simply because it is not a totalizing or monologic claim. Indeed, if there is anything that we should claim to be universal, from a dialogist's point of view, it would be precisely the existence of dialogue, and any assertion to the opposite would engage such a claim in (a hopefully constructive) dialogue!

(1980) called "a mosaic of quotations". Dialogism, in this perspective, thus entails an acknowledgement of the intertextuality or interrelation of utterances.[77]

In Bakhtin's view, language is always languages, manifesting *heteroglossia* or the diversity of social voices and speech styles in a language. There are characteristic vocabularies, ways of addressing others with different styles and intonations, which are associated with (connected to) shifting identities such as profession, generation, locale, ethnic group, and so on. Simply put, these are distinguished by different conceptualizations of experience. Heteroglossia should be distinguished from *polyphony*, which often means just a multitude of voices. However, in a more specific sense, employed by Bakhtin, polyphony is a form of higher-order unity which demands a dialogic sense of truth, a form of thinking and artistic visualization that presupposes the possibility and asserts the value of meaningful dialogue. This higher-order unity attempts to present a plurality of unmerged voices. The separateness of these voices is essential to the dialogue; even when they agree they do so from different perspectives and different senses of the world. The 'unity' is a conglomerate of points of view and voices, a combination of (more or less) individual units that do not necessarily gravitate toward systematicity. In other words, the author of this polyphony creates a world in which many disparate points of view enter into dialogue, a dialogue in which the author also participates. Moreover, if the wrong methods are used, the work will not display a genuine dialogue at all but rather an objectified and finalized image of a dialogue. As such, 'monologism' achieves unity by incorporating elements into a single design governed by a single ultimate semantic authority, whereas polyphonic unity refrains from merging distinct centers and potential unities. It is, rather, the dialogic concordance of unmerged multiples (Morson & Emerson 1990: 231-256).[78]

In his notion of *unfinalizability*, or non-closure, Bakhtin assumes that the world is an open place, consisting of ever-expanding contexts, from the nature of a single word, to the self, to the interplay between languages: "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, cited in Morson & Emerson 1990: 37). There are neither first nor last words, "the past and future are interlocked and revolve around the axis of the present".[79] To view individual people and cultural entities as unfinalizable is to accept that they always manifest some sort of 'surprisingness'; they can never be reduced to a fully comprehensible system because everything temporal changes, so there can never be a complete closure of understanding. This is contrary to views that devalue the messiness of things and the openness of time. Bakhtin was a devoted critic of what he viewed as the mistaken attachment to reductive systems, identifying it variously as *monologism* or *theoretism*,

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[77] It should also be noted that utterances need not actually be "spoken" but may be materialized in some other way, for example in written form.

[78] In the original, polyphony is consistently described in terms of a literary work because that is the way Bakhtin approaches it, primarily in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. I have omitted these references to the polyphonic novel to highlight what is of more importance to this study, hopefully without changing the basic idea.

[79] From *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (2:nd edition), Cambridge University Press, 1999, under the entry "Bakhtin", pp. 70-1.

"the assumption that everything has a meaning relating to the seamless whole, a meaning one could discover if one only had the code" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 28). But systems, at least in their more reductive forms, are problematic because wholeness is never "something given, but is always in essence posited—and at every moment … is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia",[80] the 'many-languaged-ness' of simultaneously existing discourses, which stems from the diversity of social experience, conceptualizations, and values. Wholeness and order is therefore always a task, the temporary result of work that is never completed. No fixed system can actually relate to genuine creativity: if the system is treated synchronically, as a slice of history, then there is no principle of change at all, and if it is treated diachronically, through time, "change becomes mere exfoliation of alternatives that are essentially already given" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 39). Creativity must therefore be always and everywhere, immanent in constant, ongoing processes (p. 40).

For Bakhtin, history is much more than mere change. The conclusion that all things are relative, because history entails simple variability, is in fact anti-historical "because the end of each investigation is always known in advance, and so the examination of any particular historical event is superfluous" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 44). Such a view does not take real historical time seriously, being only an awareness of flux. Instead, history may be said to require unfinalizability, thus being understood "so that it is neither random nor completely ordered, neither of which would allow for genuine 'becoming'" (ibid: 45). This requires that we view time as being open, each moment having multiple possibilities. Such a "presentness" entails that every past moment had the potential to lead in many directions. However, if we interpret the past anachronistically we tend to see in it only those possibilities that were in fact realized. This views the world as consisting of structures ("existence in ready-made form") rather than of events. Because history is a matter of unique and unrepeatable events, each with unrevealed potential, then time is irreversible and retrodiction is in principle impossible. "Time is not a mere parameter, but an operator. It fills events as much as events fill it" (ibid: 48). In the end, we must deal both creatively *and* responsibly with the otherness of the past:

> One cannot become a mere duplicate of the other through total empathy or "fusing" of horizons; that could add nothing truly new. Nor should one "modernize and distort" the other by turning the other into a version of oneself. Both these alternatives, which are often seen as the only possible ones, reduce two voices and two perspectives to one. But true responsibility and creative understanding are dialogic, and dialogue gives rise to *unexpected* questions. "If an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself, it falls out of dialogue and enters systemic cognition, which is essentially impersonal". (Morson & Emerson 1990: 100, citation from Bakhtin.)

The dialogic conception of language is certainly fundamental to Bakhtin's work but is also applied by him to various aspects of culture and the psyche. His theories of the role of language may be interpreted in psychological terms: once a person acquires language, consciousness may be said to be primarily linguistic in nature, in the form of internalized dialogic exchanges. In this way thought is enacting dialogues, often in highly abbreviated form (see Bell & Gardiner 1998, Morson & Emerson 1990: chapter 5). The application of Bakhtin's ideas to psychology has been articulated in the form of a 'dialogical self' (Richardson et al 1998, Hermans 2001,

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[80] From Bakhtin's *Discourse in the Novel*, translated in Morson & Emerson 1990: 30.

Taylor 1991). Other elements or interpretations of a Bakhtin-inspired dialogical approach will be introduced in due course.

3.2 DIALOGICAL ANALYSIS

Inspired by Bakhtin's ideas, I will attempt to adapt them for specific purposes. I will thus investigate the potential for exploring modern Yoga traditions in terms of various manifestations of dialogue. I do not wish to claim that this is the only proper way of studying Yoga or necessarily the most correct. It should be pointed out that Bakhtin's work primarily originated within literary theory, which often differs considerably from the goals of scholarship in comparative religion and indology. It is however believed that a dialogical analysis may yield important and innovative insights, here audaciously and perhaps even incautiously pursued.

The core purpose of this approach is that of exploring dialogue, thus providing for a critical method that is maximally self-reflexive, open for discussion as it were, yet not impotent of critique. As Flood puts it, "*dialogue* between researcher and object of research entails *reflexivity*, in which the social and cultural constraints of the research situation itself are highlighted, which in turn entails a distanciation that allows cultural *critique* to come into play" (1999: 34, my emphasis). Dialogue is thus seen as a context-sensitive method open to the 'otherness' of the object. It recognizes speaking and hearing subjects as the place of meaning, thereby also acknowledging 'heteroglossia', i.e. the presence of different (dominant and subservient, open and hidden, official and unofficial) discourses. Reflexivity is the ability or strategy to become aware of contexts and presuppositions. It answers "the questions by whom, for whom, and for what reasons, and allows for criticism from the same place as well as from other places" (p. 40). Critique allows for "the distanciation between self and other, self and self, and method and object, that is not objectivist, yet is critical of its own procedures, critical of the context of its occurrence, and even critical of the object of study" (p. 39). In other words, critique is ideally a discourse which lays bare contradictions within a narrative, the social and historical conditions of narrative, and indeed, within interpretation itself. It is both a form of interpretation and that which reflexively undermines interpretation (p. 80). Although all critique is temporally produced within culture and history, it can reflexively comment upon itself as a narrative tradition as well as upon other narratives (p. 86-7).

This study takes dialogue both as *method* (description and explanation as dialogue) as well as *object of study* (analysis of dialogue). As a method, the dialogical strategy attempts to reconcile *critical* and *empathetic* approaches, thus entering into a dialogue with the object of study. Critical approaches may for example attempt to expose portrayals of a tradition which present it as overly homogenous, often being a simplified version that suits certain interests. Through analysis, various forms of 'monologization' may appropriately be broken down into smaller parts, thereby revealing previously hidden contradictions or contrasts. Empathetic approaches, on the other hand, attempt to be phenomenologically involved with, or at the very least favorably disposed towards, the experiential content of this tradition. This uniting of empathetic and critical approaches is simultaneously a call for dialogue (examining the self-reflexiveness of insider perspectives) as well as being part of a dialogue (recognizing that no outsider perspective can claim objectivity or the final word). In the dialogical approach to a cultural 'entity' such as Yoga, any description or

explanation should ideally attempt to portray its essentially dialogical nature, as well as recognizing itself as part of a dialogue itself. [81]

On the level of the object we may speak of two supplementary approaches to analysis. On the one hand we have a presentation or *exposition* of the elements of a tradition or history of representation, left more or less untouched, though not of course entirely so. The intention is to attempt a description of the messy and contestatory nature of the elements. This certainly does not mean that we can establish an 'objective' description, only that there is a difference in degree between describing the elements, however biased that description itself may be, and then applying some guiding principle that enables an overview or more synthetic interpretation. The other technique thus concerns itself with a 'systematization' of the elements, which may be seen as the *application* of a structure or fundamental schema (cf. Morson & Emerson 1990: 4-11). These two techniques or strategies are not qualitatively different from each other, but are rather interlocked and connected. Nevertheless, it is perhaps possible to analytically distinguish between exposition and application. In this study, the historical background in chapter 2 may be seen as forming the expository background to a dialogical analysis, outlined in the remaining chapters.

The difference between exposition and application may also be viewed as distinguishing between descriptive and explanatory comparison respectively. According to Jeffrey Carter (1998), description is taken to be a focusing on the particularity of a phenomenon by comparing it to features of its environment and to aspects of the describer's epistemological categories. Description is an account of historical and cultural detail, a narration of the specificity of objects, ideas, actions, or events (p. 136). Explanation, on the other hand, is more concerned with designating the generality of a phenomenon by stating its similarity, relationship, or connection to other phenomena (p. 138). Of course, explanation may also denote the attempt to compare purported "facts" and "truths" with substantiated evidence from other scholars and interpreters, thus questioning the claims at hand.

The major aims of the dialogical approach, in the form developed here, are to avoid 'radical explanations'[82] and overly reductionist accounts (e.g. Segal 1992, 1994); to expose the contestatory nature of Yoga traditions rather than proceeding from a reductionist and monologic systematization; to examine the relationship between social and individual; and to focus on the history of representation rather than in terms of fundamental essences or causes. It is fundamentally comparative, interested in delineating different positions as found in various systems or schools, both

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[81] Referring to Paul Rabinow's (1986) important essay, Faure (1993: 5) argues that even the most reflexive account can be just as staged and performative as traditional "objective" scholarship. In their search for "scientificity" many social scientists downplay the performative or rhetorical nature of their discourse. Faure discusses at length structural and hermeneutical approaches, in the end opting for a "performative" approach to scholarship. However, I would argue that his particular version, saturated as it is with Derridean references, is more or less compatible with a Bakhtinian dialogism, although emphasizing the more critical and deconstructive aspects of a dialogical analysis, thus leaving aside its more ethical implications. A purportedly "dialogical" approach need not of course be what it announces itself as being, but I would nevertheless argue that a truly self-reflexive and dialogical account is *not* staged and performative in quite the same way as "traditional objective scholarship".

[82] In other words, treating Yoga as a unitary object, defined or reduced by referring to specific functions or causes that are valid for all instances of Yoga, see Clarke & Byrne (1993).

internally and between them, rather than trying to establish a single (purportedly correct) position. It recognizes and uncovers ambivalent conditions, accepting the existence of opposites without attempting to integrate them with each other.

In many ways the dialogical approach is an attempt to represent and proceed from the presence of *simultaneity*. It assumes that there is often a necessary co-existence of contrasting or conflicting features or elements, such as social-individual, continuity-innovation, integration-dispersion, order-disorder, difference-similarity, particularity-generality, immediacy-contextuality, and so on. As an example, boundary maintenance of a social formation often hinges on the capacity to balance between continuity and innovation in order to avoid stagnation or dissolution (Mol 1986). Similarly, descriptions of selfhood (i.e. individual formation) may relate both to centripetal (integral) and centrifugal (dispersive) forces in order to be capable of maintaining both stability and flexibility (Peuter 1998). In descriptions of mystical experience in Yoga traditions, there is often a tension between immediacy and contextuality, i.e. whether the individual's experience is beyond tradition and yet affected or guided by it (Forman 1990). This may be seen as reciprocity between social structures and individual agency, which constrains claims to complete innovation as well as predetermined action (Johansson 1999).

The relation between social influence and individual agency may be analyzed in terms of identity-formation. This analysis could include taking a closer look at both stabilizing and dynamic aspects of how identities are formed, both with tradition and with the individual. In its critical mode, this analysis probes mechanisms of order maintenance and consensus, perhaps by detecting forces of oppression that disallow individual negotiation and re-interpretation, or by examining the polyvocal nature of tradition-narratives. Searching for reformulations and redefinitions of origin and identity may expose hidden and unofficial discourses, thus questioning stereotypes and unsettling the structures of a narrative account. Yet, we do not have to deny potential and temporary unities, i.e. unities that are not absolute or solid. There is nothing wrong with unity in itself, it is only a problem when it claims a 'factuality' that is universal or constant. Alternatively, we may attempt to dissolve reifications and disband reductions, thus questioning any and all claims to universality or ahistoricity. In the relation between continuity and innovation, or between similarity and difference, we may look for various instances of *hybridization*, i.e. processes that combine different features or themes in (partially) new ways.

Regarding mystical and religious experience, our analysis may entail becoming aware of tensions between the notions of attainment and detachment, or immediacy and contextuality. It could also involve a critical assessment of claims to 'authentic-ity' and 'integration', or analyzing by reference to a continuum between scholastic and pragmatic application, between theory and practice. In notions of liberation, we may find unresolved or polarized tensions between transcendence and immanence, between embodied and disembodied liberation.

These simultaneities or 'tension-fields' are usually not acknowledged in the Yoga traditions' own self-representations or descriptions. Part of the aim of a dialogical approach is thus to analyze, problematize and uncover co-existing elements, ques-tioning over-emphasis on one or the other. One way of doing this is to alternate between contrasting forms and levels of description, revealing contradictions or heterogeneity within a professed unity. This means pointing out when there are

accounts or interpretations that divert from the conventional or accepted. Another means is to emphasize partiality, that a phenomenon may partake in dimensions of 'both x and y', thus indicating ambiguities and flexible re-adjustments. A third approach is to detect occurrences of combination, fusion and blending, albeit without fully merging the participating voices or themes. This means to observe and become aware of innovative interpretations yet simultaneously maintain some perspective of the antecedent. We should also allow divergent texts and participants to be heard, thus continuously questioning temporary unities.

These three techniques may be seen as various ways of attempting 'polyphonic' or 'second-order' unity, i.e. systematization without dissolving multiplicity. This is our main purpose: *to excavate diversity in a non-synthetic manner*. Much of this may perhaps seem common-sensical, though in my view to build a framework in the manner proposed enables a far more nuanced and profitable description-explanation of Yoga traditions than when research is carried out without such a framework. Instead of simply deconstructing and explaining—stating causal relationships and doing away with 'faults' and 'contradictions' as it were—there is also a sense of higher-order that permits for and enhances continuing dialogue. It does not attempt to replace one monologic account with another, but wishes to 'open up' the field for discussion. This also has the additional result of perceiving and creating more numerous fields of discussion than is perhaps otherwise possible.[83]

As we have seen, an important element in the dialogical approach is to examine the tension between the social and individual. In scholarship of religion there is often a tendency to polarize the social and individual foundations of religio-mystical phenomena. Though it may at times be necessary to focus on or emphasize one of them, such an approach often unwittingly tends to break into theories and conclusions, thus ultimately reducing all aspects of a phenomenon to either social or individual sources or aspects. By contrast, one of the contentions and, indeed, presuppositions of this study is to recognize the value of balancing psychological and sociological approaches with a religio-mystical tradition such as yoga. It is in part a philosophical commitment to an ontology of self-in-relation, arguing for a reciprocal relationship between individual and social dimensions. The individual responds to, adjusts, and resists his socio-cultural surroundings.

In other words, if there is great difficulty in ultimately separating the individual from the social, then both dimensions should be included as much as possible in research. *Social interaction* is considered to be of central importance to the dialogical analysis, focusing on the sphere between psychology and sociology. This requires tools and approaches that allow for a sliding between different levels of abstraction and subject fields, thus facilitating and making possible a dynamic perspective of the relationship between individual and society. It should involve a dynamic under-

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[83] To some people this approach might suggest an ultimately disastrous attraction to 'hairsplitting' or disorder, perhaps symptomatic of (post)modern individualism and agnostic uncertainty. It does, it should be conceded, differ considerably from those approaches that for different purposes seek more pragmatic and holistic views. It also diverts from 'insider' perspectives of Yoga that, it could easily be imagined, would claim that too much desire (*rāga*) for 'mind-knowledge' only remains within an ignorant (*avidyā*) and egoistic mode of being (*asmitā*), which is unfruitful to the practicing yogi who wishes to reach 'real' understanding (*vidyā, jñāna*). This might very well be so, but in my view a truly dialogic approach could convince us that we should not be afraid of disorder or of 'not-knowing', thus practicing humility in the face of genuine (and existential) multiplicity.

standing of the relationship between individual/actor, social interaction, and society/culture, addressing these three elements at various points without reducing the encounter between human beings to individual thoughts, emotions or experiences, nor to an overarching cultural process (cf. Johansson 1999: 13-9). We attempt to avoid the methodological objectivity of both social facts as well as phenomenological "matters of fact" (Flood 1999: 30), though certainly drawing on important truths from both phenomenology and explanatory approaches. For example, in yoga traditions it seems important to have at least some understanding of the 'feel' of doing meditation or physical postures. On the other hand, critical analysis is also important in order to analyze and dialogize representations of tradition and identity.[84]

A dialogic framework attempts to search Yoga traditions for intellectualist and emotionalist contents as well as socio-cultural interconnections, though primarily by focusing on communication and representation. The religious aspects of Yoga are specifically important. Whatever else it might involve, religion typically supports social values and stability, especially by reinforcing identification. Ultimate questions, answered by religion, are perhaps matters of individual concern but also meet group needs precisely because of its function for the individual. The primary concern of a dialogical analysis is not, then, the relationship between 'religion' and 'reality' but the relationship between individual and social dimensions in social formations that involve also religious aspects. In this view, a dialogical mode of analysis is in fact critical of any account that attempts to reduce a phenomenon to individual or social origins, whether this phenomenon is religious or otherwise. We are thus able to connect religious experiences, practices and beliefs with other social experiences, practices and beliefs, yet not rule out individual agency. The method followed here attempts to be receptive to the distinctive nature and power of religious and mystical phenomena, yet simultaneously acknowledge their interlacing with other social forces and processes (cf. Northcott 1999: 193-4).

A dialogical analysis has the advantage that the question of significance rather than truth is the more fundamental issue: the question of truth becomes more or less subordinated to the question of representation, to questions of cultural transmission, and to questions about the formation and re-formation of tradition (Flood 1999: 174-5). Consequently, the dialogical approach focuses on the ways in which texts and behaviors are transmitted, on their internalization by the individual practitioner, and on the function of texts and truth claims within the practices of the tradition (p. 191). "It is precisely this process of the reformulation of tradition and the redefining of identity that is open to critical, though dialogical, academic inquiry, through examining the processes of self-representation and cultural replication" (p. 177). The advantage is that this approach does not primarily concern itself with validating (or delegitimating), but with enabling a greater variety of interpretations.

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[84] Phenomenological or empathetic description can also be regarded as narratives "constructed within the constraints of the questions brought to the material and by the intentionalities of the material itself" (Flood 1999: 113). The material thus established by *description* or 'emplotment', can then be related to material external to it, through *explanation*, along with the reflexive awareness of the narrative situatedness of explanation itself. This is similar to what we have called descriptive and explanatory comparison, or exposition and application respectively.

However, we do not have to be methodologically agnostic in a strict sense of the term. A dialogical analysis is certainly an interpretive perspective that to some degree goes beyond insider views and yet, ideally, invites dialogue. This so-called 'reflexive' approach is a response to objectivity in general. It recognizes the ability of language and symbols to turn back on themselves, and resists the impulse to objectify, simplify, or decontextualize the other. Disinterest or neutrality is considered impossible because, among other things, it betrays the issue of power (McCutcheon 1999: 289-90). In other words, this means that our perspective recognizes both a measure of both outsideness as well as un-finalizability of the other, so that the insider-outsider distinction is relativized but not fully erased. One should perhaps strive toward agnosticism because it supplies the other with opportunities to respond to our analysis and conclusions. Yet agnosticism is not entirely possible, even if desirable to some extent, and a blind faith in it would only mask interests and interpretations, either by fusing with the other and suppressing genuine differences, or by imposing ourselves, perhaps unintentionally, upon our surroundings.[85]

As Fay (1996) argues, being an insider or outsider, in terms of having an experience, is not the key element for understanding. More important is the ability to interpret the meaning of an experience. "Knowledge consists not in the experience itself but in grasping the sense of this experience. For this reason knowledge is not psychic identification but interpretive understanding: knowing ourselves and others is an instance of decoding, clarifying, and explicating rather than an instance of psychic union" (p. 27). Thus, genuine understanding goes beyond sensitivity, though it is of course heightened by it. This reminds us of the interrelation between empathetic and critical approaches. Instead of exaggerating the role played by empathy, thus merging as much as possible with the other's position and renouncing one's outsideness, we need perhaps what Bakhtin called 'live entering', i.e. simultaneously renouncing and exploiting one's surplus of vision: "one brings into interaction both perspectives simultaneously and creates an 'architectonics' of vision reducible to neither" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 54). This is to actively enter, or project, into another's place, without losing one's own place, which presupposes that 'I' and 'other' are always transgredient to each other, though never wholly so (Flood 1999: 153).

The dialogical method thus promotes a 'view from somewhere', focusing on language as the ground of meaning-enabling reciprocal communication. It highlights the non-closure of explanation and sees research as a response and reproduction of "another's text in a second, framing text that comments, evaluates and so on" (Flood

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[85] Compare Hamilton (1995), who maintains that methodological agnosticism should not be driven too far, otherwise being incapable of critique (pp. 4-6); we should not "deny ourselves the capacity to make judgments after extensive examination of beliefs" (p. 9). Explanation must be allowed to differ from the believer's account, a perfectly legitimate and normal procedure (pp. 9-10). In a similar vein, Meredith McGuire (1991) acknowledges that "important dimensions of religion may not be accessible to sociological interpretation. Nevertheless, whatever else they may be, religious behavior and experience are also human and are therefore proper subjects for sociological research and understanding" (McQuire 1997: 8). King (1999: 41-52) views methodological agnosticism as a praxis-ideal that one should aspire to, resisting to take sociological theories as *definitive* accounts of religious beliefs, which otherwise erases precisely the religious or 'revelatory' dimension. Instead, "one should always return to the religious symbol itself, not by abandoning criticism, but by allowing the object under investigation to speak in the light of such critical analysis" (p. 49).

1999: 50). The dialogical method realizes the necessity of outsideness, a distance that allows for understanding as well as a perception of the other that s/he cannot have. It then recognizes itself as an insider position towards another, of which it can *therefore* be critical. Differing positions may, in a sense, be irreconcilable but can still continue in dialogue.

The dialogical approach is also in many ways similar to the notion of "thick description", originally coined by Gilbert Ryle and subsequently elaborated by Clifford Geertz. A thick description contains a high degree of contextual richness, paying attention to the sociocultural and historical circumstances which contribute to the meaning of an event (King 1999b: 77). One difference is perhaps that the dialogical model wishes to preserve the heterogeneous and polyvocal nature of the researched object, not attempting to synthesize multiplicity and contradiction within a finalized and rationalized account (cf. Bakhtin's 'higher-order polyphony'). A dialogical interpretation of 'thick description' asserts that it should not only consist of a high degree of contextual richness, but also that this contextuality is then left untouched, so to speak—i.e. that different voices and discourses are not synthesized into a homogenous whole, but leaves them in a conversation with each other.

When it comes to the thorny issue of the role of orientalism in the study of Indian religion, I basically agree with Peter van der Veer (1994) that "we need both an analysis of 'tradition' that is not prejudiced by the discourse of modernity and a theory of the impact of colonialism and orientalism that does not deny agency to colonial subjects" (p. x). Though not a challenge easily dealt with, perhaps it will suffice to say that this study at least *aspires* to avoid the most blatant orientalist conceptions, though even they at times may yield valuable insights (Faure 1993: 6). Certainly denial or simple rejection of orientalism once and for all would only replicate it, the Orientalist's predicament perhaps being no more than "an exotic variant of the hermeneutic circle" (ibid: 7).

Bernard Faure's work (1993) remains an important inspiration for this study. Faure advocates the need of an approach that tries to avoid the traps of both Orientalism and "post-Orientalism" while preserving their insights. Perhaps we do not in fact have to try to understand another culture in a purely indigenous perspective. Drawing on Bakhtin's ideas, Faure suggests that we should valorize outsideness as a powerful factor in understanding another culture, as long as it does not claim any transcendental privilege (p. 7-8). Faure's aim is thus to intertwine, mediate and cross-graft various types of discourse, Western as well as indigenous, hoping that they might enhance each other. This "blurring of genres" (p. 11), the interlacing of insider and outsider perspectives, seems to me not only a desirable approach, but also an appropriate description of what often happens anyway, whether one strives for it or not. The advantage of the dialogical approach, however, is that it attempts to make these processes visible; both in its own conclusions as well as in the dynamics that are part of the 'object' it studies. If they are left implicit and unannounced, there is a considerable risk that scholarship only imposes itself upon its surroundings, and that the "blurring of genres" only results in a monologic and finalizing analysis.

3.3 TENSION-FIELDS

I will postulate a set of 'tension-fields' which serves as an analytical framework of themes and elements that are considered important to an understanding of modern

Haṭha Yoga. This framework introduces a set of thematic tensions as a form of application, or explanatory comparison, that attempts to state similarities, relationships and connections, albeit without finalizing their interpretations.[86] This systematization, or better, 'polyphonic unity', thus tries to preserve connections with an original messiness, and is primarily intended to reveal discourses and multiplicities that are hidden within otherwise monologic representations.

The use of these tension-fields rests on the assumption that Yoga traditions constitute public arenas and fields for *collective action*, what Melucci (1996) describes as a set of social practices that "exhibit similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space" (p. 20). In this view, Yoga traditions can be regarded as social movements that publicly discuss and argue for specific interpretations of key issues and problems, relating one way or another to what is deemed to be of central importance to the category of 'Yoga'. They do not necessarily have to be in agreement, internally or externally, as to what issues are considered more important. Nor do they have to be in concordance regarding how these issues may be interpreted. Using the notion of 'collective action' is an attempt to account for social *action* and yet provide a foundation to its *collective* character as something different from the sum total of aggregate individual behaviors. It recognizes that social processes are products of individual actions and choices, and that the collective dimension of social behavior should not simply be taken as a given (ibid: 14-5). Collective action can appropriately be analyzed by addressing its relationship to a "'structured' field of relationships which provides resources and constraints for the action itself" (p. 17). It should be seen as "the outcome of complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging" and involves "an articulated structure of relations, circuits of interaction and influence, choices among alternative forms of behaviour" (p. 18). The collective aspect of a tradition does not consist of a given unity, but is the temporary outcome of interaction, negotiation, and conflict among these relations. This complex process is often veiled by the traditions themselves, not infrequently also by apologetic scholars or critical opponents alike.

In short, Yoga traditions may be seen as social formations with homogenizing tendencies (McCutcheon 1998), yet also consisting of heteroglossial and multivocal layers. Contrary to popular opinion, Yoga is not found squarely within a specific approach or "way of life", such as "practical", "experimental" or "contemplative", but manifests dialogues and controversies in different ways, constantly changing positions with new interpretations and altered forms of negotiation. There is no

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[86] The metaphor of 'tension' is used in an attempt to describe how various themes and elements, though part of the same field, may be at odds or in a state of tension with each other. 'Tension' may be understood in various ways. However, the usage that is intended here should be regarded as the form of tension that results from the elongation of an elastic body, like when a rope is stretched. The different ends of this rope are connected to each other, situated on a continuum as it were. This is also similar to when a force, though interacting with other forces, causes unrest or imbalance in a 'place' by exerting pressure or weight on a particular point. Another form of tension is that which arises when there is a state of (latent) hostility or opposition. This latter interpretation is only appropriate if the 'opposing' elements are not reified, seen as 'things' or polarities unrelated to each other, as with binary oppositions. Different elements (e.g. discursive or conceptual themes) may well be part of the same field, i.e. inter-related, yet exert pressure or cause imbalance when moving away from each other.

philosophical or historical 'essence', but rather a constantly changing movement and restructuring among many different elements.

The set of tensions should not be viewed as a reified (or predetermined) field of relationships, which would only systematize the history of Yoga according to a monologizing and final principle. Its purpose is not to *reduce* phenomena to simple structural habits, as is often the case, but rather to *expand* on their flexible nature through imaginative analysis. The tension-fields are not actual opposites or dualities, instead they should be looked upon as constituting a dynamic field of hermeneutically intertwined patterns of oscillation, composed of analytical distinctions that cannot be totally separated from each other, co-existing to some degree. The tensions overlap to a certain extent, there is no absolute distinction between them, nor are they to be seen as choices of either/or but rather as matters of degree. Consequently, it is not possible to precisely define the "extremes", nor any intermediate stages between them, but instead we should approach the tension-fields as we would a polythetic concept. This opens the analytical grid for discussion and reformulation. Tensions "move" or "oscillate"; they do not stay in one place, as it were, but are continuously redefined and relocated due to hermeneutical necessities. The boundaries between them are fluid, being subject to constant renegotiation and forming a dynamic relationship of contrasts and gradations. Of course, claims of reconciliation and integration are common both with scholars and apologetics,[87] though in my view we should always be critical of holistic declarations as they tend to mask and camouflage the historically situated interpretations at work (as well as the dimensions of power and privilege that may form an important part of these interpretations).

Tensions may of course manifest *between* schools as well as *within*, occasionally even within a particular text or the production of an individual theorist.[88] Accordingly, we should not impose the notion of distinct schools on what is often more a conglomeration of differing viewpoints. As argued throughout this thesis, we are better off when allowing for greater diversity rather than uniformity.

The tension-fields may be summarized under four headings, in many ways also overlapping with or connecting to each other. These categories should only be seen as a preliminary outline, not as a comprehensive scheme:[89]

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[87] Cf. Whicher (1998: 46), who claims that "Patañjali's whole approach unites theory and practice, bridging and healing any rifts between thinking and acting, metaphysics and ethics, transcendence and immanence … strives for and achieves a basic unity of conception, including a theory-practice unification, founded in direct yogic experience and given expression in Patañjali's central definition of Yoga (*YS* I.2)".

[88] It is my experience that modern Haṭha Yoga traditions often tend to accommodate different situations and contexts, adjusting their views according to the listener or recipient. As an example, the element of reaching out to God, sometimes articulated as the ultimate goal of Yoga, may be downplayed when talking to a supposedly atheistic scientific-minded person. This is frequently seen as a proof of the flexibility and universality of Yoga teachings. The question remains, however, to what extent different versions are really compatible, and to what extent they co-exist only in a state of tension.

[89] The examples used under these headlines should only be taken as guidelines for further inquiry. Obviously there are many different ways of conceptualizing the spectrum of a tension in different contexts and according to different theories, not to mention for different objects of study. What is of primary concern is only to hint at the potential multiplicity that may be revealed through it.

1. structure ←→ process

This tension entails choosing between static or dynamic descriptions of phenomena, predominantly psychological or social categories such as the nature of mind or selfhood, or the content of tradition. A structural account of the mind would perhaps treat it as a container or as an entity that has enduring and definite qualities, similar to a physical object, whereas a more dynamic interpretation could view mind as a generalization for the interplay between awareness and movements of consciousness. Similarly, a static view of selfhood might take for granted an indestructible and coherent core abiding in the person, whereas a 'process-oriented' version of the self could see it as constantly changing patterns or orchestrations of internalized voices.

Other examples might be the theory of five sheaths (*kośa-pañcaka-viveka*), or the eight limbs of yoga. Are they used as heuristic tools or seen as objectively existing structures? In terms of identity, this tension might manifest as moving between, or combining, constructivist or essentialist conceptions (Calhoun 1994). Similarly, in the study of mysticism it is displayed as a friction between constructivist and perennialist approaches to mystical experiences (Forman 1990), or between structured (working through an inherent order, such as the five sheaths or the eight limbs) and unstructured (method and goal are identical) teachings (Rawlinson 1989).[90]

2. transcendence ←→ immanence

Transcendence is the quality or state of being transcendent, of exceeding usual limits. This may mean extending beyond the limits of ordinary experience, or even beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge. In a different, but perhaps connected sense, it could mean transcending the universe or material existence. Immanence, on the other hand, is to remain or operate within a given or ordinary domain of reality or experience.

In Yoga traditions this turns up as the tension between embodied (*jīvanmukti*) and disembodied (*videhamukti*) liberation (Fort & Mumme 1996). Is liberation only to transcend beyond the limits of ordinary experience or does it also entail transcendence beyond material existence? If so, how is that conceptualized, as a 'hot' event (relating to something powerful which is other than oneself and which has its own life) or as a 'cool' accomplishment (reaching the very essence of oneself, accessed by self-realization) (Rawlinson 1989)? Similarly, Smart (1997: 43) distinguishes between contemplative (*dhyāna*) and devotional (*bhakti*) styles of religion, depending on if one conceptualizes the ultimate focus of tradition as being impersonal or personal. Moreover, they can coexist more or less equally, or one may be posited as superior to the other.

From another perspective Eliade (1990) has distinguished between the striving for freedom (transcendence) or immortality (immanent perfection). Sarbacker (2001) has analyzed this in terms of cessative (*nirodha, bodhi*) and numinous (*samāpatti, siddhi*) dimensions of classical Yoga. Cessative orientations represent the drive towards detachment and release, whereas numinous aspects emphasize attainment, associated with the development of special powers of action and perception. In Hinduism in general we may speak of world-affirming (*pravṛtti*) and world–denying imagery (*nivṛtti*). The notoriously ambiguous notion of 'freedom'

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[90] See Herbert Guenther's *From Reductionism to Creativity* for an account of the structure/process dialectics within Buddhist philosophy.

may variously be seen as a withdrawal or transcendence of the world ('freedom from'), on the one hand, or as self-transparent being-in-the-world ('freedom in' or 'with'), on the other—perhaps attained through a process of illuminating awareness.

3. **closure ←→ unfinalizability**

This may concern the relation between generality and particularity. In their most extreme forms it results in indiscriminate universalism and sterile relativism respectively. From the dialogical perspective, of course, both these alternatives are monologic and ultimately futile. In terms of interpretation, this is exhibited in how one views the importance of authority, how constraint and freedom are treated in an interpretational situation. Tuck (1990) examines this as the interconnectedness of exegesis and isogesis. From another perspective, this represents the tension between tradition (orthodoxy) and innovation (heterodoxy), or between systematization and adaptation. How does one approach the past and the future? And what role does the creative individual play in the history of representation? Regarding knowledge, and especially the mystical variety, this may be understood as falling somewhere between 'authenticity' (e.g. absolute or complete realization) and 'subjectivity' (e.g. unauthenticated and incomplete understanding). Sharf (1995, 1998) has investigated this in mystical experience as a tension between epistemological certainty and objective criteria. There are of course many other examples of this tension-pair.

4. **theory ←→ practice**

From one perspective this is the oscillation between experimentation and scholasticism, or in Weberian terms, between charisma and 'routinization'. These may crystallize into clerical or more practically oriented strands of tradition. Another way of viewing this is to distinguish between ecstatic and ritualistic dimensions of mystical tradition, perhaps often connected to the notion of peripheral and central cults respectively (Sarbacker 2001; Lewis 1989). In Hindu traditions this is often stated as choosing between, or integrating, the paths (*mārga*) of knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*karma*). In a slightly different context, in comparative religion there is an important distinction between 'ideal' religious texts and 'actual' religious beliefs (King 1999b). This entails that what is stated in the texts or the 'image' of a tradition is not actually what its representatives practice.

There are certainly many other ways of describing and categorizing dialogical tensions in Yoga traditions, not the least of which would be to delve deeper into the possible varieties and combinations. Moreover, we could also conduct a multidimensional analysis, aligning different 'social languages' or dimensions (ritual, material, narrative, and so on) beside or on top of each other. In any case, the above suggestions should be seen as a point of reference and departure.

3.4   TURNING TOWARD OR AWAY FROM THE WORLD?

One example of how to work with the tension-fields proposed above is to expand on the relation between transcendence and immanence. An important theme in the history of Hinduism is that of the tension between engagement with (*pravṛtti*) and withdrawal from (*nivṛtti*) the world. Contrary to popular views, *pravṛtti* has an important role in Brahmanical householder traditions, as for example the ethical cultivation of sensual experience and aesthetic pleasure (*kāma*), or worldly success

and profit (*artha*), part of the so-called *varṇāśrama-dharma* system (Flood 1996: 58-65). Roots of Hindu accent on *pravṛtti* may in fact be traced all the way back to early Vedic religion (Lipner 1994: 167), and there is even a tendency to see the worldly goals of *artha* and *kāma* as an integral part of spiritual life. For renouncers, sometimes sensual experience, in proper context, was seen as producing "a rounded personality by expending natural inclinations" (ibid: 169). Moreover, scriptures of all kinds are replete with imagery of worldly life, such as in the *Gītagovinda*, and in classical Hindu dance and in various tantric contexts we encounter similar themes.

In contrast to these mostly householder values there are also world-denying trends, having their roots in the Śramaṇic renouncer traditions, in part outside the Brahmanical orthopraxy. According to Lipner (1994: 175-6), especially later Advaita Vedānta would overwhelmingly emphasize *nivṛtti* at the expense of *pravṛtti*, and to be sure many Sanskritic myths denigrate sex and sensibility. Nevertheless, Lipner claims, on the whole an ethical *pravṛtti* has a central place, the positive side of the ambivalence towards body and matter thus being a vibrant one.

How have these dimensions been played out in the history of Yoga? A first example may be taken from Tantrism. White (1996) argues that the (primarily nondualist) tantric universe, developed in medieval India, can be seen as "a unified system that oscillated between withdrawal (*nivṛtti*) and return (*pravṛtti*) on the part of a cosmic yogin, between effulgence (*prakāśa*) and reflection (*vimarśa*) on the part of supreme consciousness, between emission and resorption, etc." (p. 263). In this system, the yogic body is seen as the stage for the return of the absolute from existence to essence through the descent and ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī*. This return requires a forceful (*haṭha*) reversal of what are, in mortal creatures, irreversible tendencies such as entropy, aging, disease, and death. "So it is that long before the much-glorified stage of yogic or alchemical reintegration, in which an emanated or differentiated manifest world implodes on itself, into a single essence—a drop, vibration, phoneme, wave, photon, quantum, etc.—a great deal of ungloriuos preparatory work must be carried out" (ibid). In haṭha-yogic theory and practice this was also conceptualized by reference to the individual's subtle body, i.e. a bipolar body divided into two halves at the level of the naval:

> Of these, the lower half is associated with femininity, with male semen that is 'prey' to blood and to the fire of the sun; and the upper with masculinity, with semen that has been refined into nectar identified with the moon. The lower half is further identified with mundane existence, with the dispersal of the individual's life into a myriad of worldly concerns paralleled by the dispersal, in his lower body, of his seed: this is *pravṛtti*, extroversion. The upper half, on the contrary, is identified with supermundane consciousness, with the reintegration of all that is normally dispersed in mundane existence: this is *nivṛtti*, introversion. …
>
> [Haṭha Yoga] involves forcefully controlling, even reversing the body's natural tendencies through the combined techniques of breath control, fixed postures, and meditation. What these techniques aim to reverse is the aging process, which yogic traditions identify with the predominance in the body of the solar and fiery digits. This yogic battery of techniques for reversing the course of nature and time is variously called *ulaṭa sādhana* (regressive practice), *kāya kalpa* (bodily reintegration), and *parāvṛtti* (retroversion). (White 1996: 38-9)

This tantric and alchemical model has largely been abandoned in the Krishnamacharya traditions, focusing almost exclusively on more contemplative dimensions, influenced by teachings from the *Yogasūtra*, and apparently also from

Vedānta.[91] The relationship between mundane existence and supermundane transcendence (and accompanying conceptions such as immortality and living liberation) is usually not explicitly theorized or dealt with, and imagery associated with 'the tantric universe' is conspicuously absent. When the relation between transcendence and immanence is at all mentioned, the Krishamacharya traditions typically deal with it in terms of classical Hindu notions, such as 'the basic aims of life' (*dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*)—which entails that worldly goals are chronologically succeeded by a striving for transcendent liberation, or in terms of the integration of the five sheaths (as borrowed from Vedāntic theory), in which more 'mundane' levels of existence are transcended by moving into the 'inner' and supposedly transcendent dimensions. At other times, Yoga is seen as taking steps that would lead to God, in order to become one with God (Desikachar 1995: 224). Also, reference is made to renunciation (*saṃnyāsin*), which is seen to involve the progressive turning away from involvement in and attachment to the external material world (see e.g. Kraftsow 2002). Yet, when renunciation is referred to, it is often done through re-interpretation.[92] How, then, is all this to be aligned with the often claimed idea that Yoga helps us be more fully ourselves *in* the world? Are there contradictions in the various approaches that are left unarticulated, perhaps involving significant reinter-pretations of notions such as renunciation and liberation? In my view, this is an important subject to examine and analyze in further research.

Another model that is often used, as Sjoman (1986: 196-7) points out, is to align *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* with ritual action (*karma*) and wisdom (*jñāna*) respectively, together forming two basic contrasting poles. These are then seen as integrated by simultaneously practicing, or developing, both these dimensions. For example, it is argued that the yogi should both uphold dutiful responsibility (*dharma*), to serve the highest good (as ritual action), and simultaneously cultivate spiritual knowledge or insight as part of the strive to attain freedom (*mokṣa*). It is rarely specified if the duties—often identified with the *niyama* and *yama* practices of the *Yogasūtra*—are only to be seen as necessary instruments for yogic development or as ethical principles in themselves. This also means that the relation between freedom and worldly achievement is left unspecified, i.e. if freedom enhances being-in-the world (which is often implicitly argued for) or entails detachment from the world altogether (which is certainly implied by other statements). Consequently, the different dimensions of transcendence and immanence are often left in a state of tension, without specifying how they could be integrated or held apart from each other. In the Krishanamacharya traditions there is a considerable emphasis on the cultivation of awareness and harmonization of body-mind, yet what this entails in terms of liberation and the soteriological goals of Yoga practice is often left aside,

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[91] For example, it is stated that Krishnamacharya believed that "the way to realize the great understanding of *advaita* (nondualism) is through yoga practice" (Desikachar 1995: xviii, also cf. p. xxvi). In references to Advaita Vedānta it is often left unstated how nondualism is to be understood more specifically in the context of classical Yoga. There are in fact considerable differences in the approaches of Śaṅkara and Patañjali that are not explored or articulated.

[92] Desikachar (1995), for example, claims that "what was traditionally understood by the term *sannyāsa* is nowadays no longer possible" (p. 227). He thus argues that we should reinterpret this notion as meaning "to give yourself totally to a higher power, to God" (p. 226), and that Krishnamacharya was a sannyāsin par excellence yet also a family man; "he never experienced any contradiction between living with his family and living in the true spirit of a sannyāsin" (pp. 226-7).

only very vaguely articulated. In my view, the *Yogasūtra* does contain interesting interpretational possibilities of joining yogic realization with dispassionate action in the world (cf. Whicher 1998). These interpretations are, however, rarely brought up explicitly, often put aside in favor of a highly structured and practice-oriented approach to the individual's development. This is an approach which emphasizes that one can only understand contradictions between liberation and being-in-the-world by realizing them through gradually developing one's practice and thereby accessing higher levels of insight. Soteriological and liberative dimensions are simply left aside in the beginning.

These are just to be seen as preliminary examples of how the above-mentioned tension-fields can be used. It also shows that several of the tensions overlap with each other. Through extended research, examining the various statements and discourses of representatives of modern Haṭha Yoga, it is my belief that using a framework of tension-fields would uncover a considerably complex, heterogeneous and multifaceted discursive field, one which is often taken for granted by practitioners themselves, yet which nevertheless has serious implications for how Yoga practice is in fact performed and conducted, and moreover guided by often unstated principles.

This ends our outline of the dialogical approach. In the following chapters I will expand upon some of the issues that have been brought up so far, both theoretically and by way of examples.

4 TRADITION AND IDENTITY

4.1 SYSTEMATIZATION OF TRADITION

There are many different ways of imposing order on a messy world, approaches that attempt to reduce paradoxes, contestations and straggling conversations to a systematic and more manageable unity. Nonetheless, it is perhaps possible to speak of three particularly prevalent methods of representing schools or traditions diachronically:[93] The *structuralist* model describes a tradition as a set of variations on a theme (or several themes), as surface transformations of an unchanging "deep structure". The passage of time, as well as the "graphist" or writer-scholar, may illuminate one or another aspect of that structure, but the whole is essentially timeless. Ideas and thoughts never really affect the underlying unity, so changes only take place on the surface. Inadjustable or contradictory elements are simply subjugated, ignored or even unnoticed. In the *embryonic* model, alterations are described as variants not of a deep structure but of an initial idea or problem. The idea is largely present at the outset and is then restated through history, a history that simply "unfolds" rather than genuinely develops. With this approach there is an obvious risk of anachronistically reading into the earlier phenomena ideas that had not yet developed. The *teleological* model is an inversion of the embryonic approach, an end-determined model where everything is seen as flowing toward a predetermined ideology or resting point, which is authoritative for understanding everything that came before it. All these three versions have in fact been used in studying Yoga, as well as Indian philosophy more generally.

The models are all alike in that they allot contexts to the background—historical and contingent events only superficially affect the contours of an unfolding idea, but they do not change it in fundamental ways. These approaches should, however, more appropriately be seen as *applications*; they may yield valuable insights and develop latent potentials but should nevertheless be distinguished from *expositions*. I will attempt an analysis which is intended to expose and communicate the "messiness", keeping reformulations and inconsistencies as intact as possible. It tries to trace connections without imposing a reductionist system (as in structuralist, embryonic/teleological systems), interpreting in terms of key problems and questions around which debates and innovations cluster. It differs from monologic and essentialist approaches to traditions, and instead interprets their key terms and discourses as internally dialogized microworlds. In this way we always enter into a dialogic relationship with our topic, responding to something spoken before and taking a stand in relation to earlier utterances about the "already populated" topic.

To do justice to heterology and make room for "nomadic or 'interstitial' thinking", says Faure (1993: 9), scholarly writings must become multivocal and nonlinear, thus allowing for the repressed areas of tradition to emerge. But they also "need to take seriously into account the tradition's attempts to structure its own multiplicity", and "to unsettle the structure of a text or of a tradition without passing entirely

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[93] See Morson & Emerson (1990: 4-11). I have adapted their account, which originally deals with different ways of writing biography, for my own purposes, of what may be called "ideography" ("representation of ideas").

beyond textuality" (ibid). In other words, our study should ideally uncover heterology, hiding beneath both scholarly and apologetic discourses of homogenization, yet also somehow relate to the tradition's own schematizations, not totally ignoring them. This is the route to be followed here, and a good place to start is to take a closer look at how Yoga is situated within Hindu philosophy.

The view that there are six schools (*darśana*) of Hindu philosophy has gained prominence in the modern era, a classification that is not without its problems. First of all, it ignores the considerable diversity within the schools, thus fundamentally misrepresenting their contestatory nature. Second, it overlooks the variety of doxographical accounts offered before the modern era and marginalizes several schools within Indian philosophy as a whole, such as Buddhist, Jaina and Cārvaka (materialist) thought (King 1999a: 46).[94] Despite its shortcomings, many early scholars in the field uncritically accepted the theory of six schools. In fact, the schools were often further reduced by Western scholars in the nineteenth century to three philosophical positions (*nyāya*, *vedānta* and *sāṅkhya*), depending on certain selective criteria: "they accepted a philosophical school as significant only if it took a position on what they believed was the central issue of philosophy: the disjunction between appearance and reality" (Tuck 1990: 21). Yoga was thereby seen as a supplement to Sāṅkhya, interpreted as a facsimile of Platonic and Cartesian concerns, and perceived as an unsatisfactory and unsuccessful form of dualism, "like a doomed, archaic hybrid" (p. 23). Of course, such misconstruals and oversimplifications must be avoided.

As Richard King maintains, it is important to be sensitive "to the innovativeness of individual thinkers as well as to the broader scholastic (*darśana*) and traditional (*sampradāya*) allegiances which serve as the platform for their speculations" (1999a: xv). This is to distinguish between the thought of an individual thinker and the thought of a school, thus understanding a school as an abstraction, a logical *construction* summarizing the writings of various thinkers who share a similar outlook in tackling certain problems. Therefore, greater emphasis should be placed upon the contestatory nature of philosophy in ancient India, viewing the history of Indian philosophy as a history of argumentation and debate. Even the Vedic heritage, the "origin" as it were, is indeed polymorphic, containing a number of variant models of the spiritual life (Rawlinson 1978: 271). On the other hand, we must not focus on innovation and individual thinkers at the expense of continuity and tradition:

> The 'trickle down theory of knowledge' presupposes that social, historical and cultural transformations occur as the result of the inspired interventions of a small minority of cultural leaders and initiators. This approach … ignores the complexity of historical processes and the agency of the 'subaltern' in initiating new eras and ways of thinking … [and] supports the claim that philosophy is an activity of abstract reflection that is free from socio-cultural conditioning (and thus immune to sociological and cultural analysis). (King 1999a: 8)

Affiliation with a specific *darśana* is to a large extent built into the history of argumentation in Indian philosophical discourse, the so-called *vāda* tradition. Commen-

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[94] Before it became standard practice in the modern era to identify the schools as 'Hindu' there were in fact radically different accounts of what constituted the six basic systems of thought in India. At different times they would include Jaina and Buddhist schools, Cārvāka and Śaiva philosophy, often omitting Yoga and Vedānta. The modern, now well-established version, obviously exhibits allegiance to Hindu brahmanical culture and lifestyle (King 1999a: 45-6).

tators and individual thinkers typically argue and position themselves in terms of a school, teaching or tradition in order to stake their claims and contribute to the development of their chosen 'tradition-text'. Arguments, both with the proponent as well as the opponent, are presented in the form of thematic debates between rival schools. The effect of such debates makes the delineation between competing viewpoints and schools clearer, sharpening discourse as it were. The basic aim of this model is not consensus but "clarification of difference", i.e. intersubjective engagement of one mode of socially sanctioned discourse with another (Flood 1999: 57). A dialogical analysis should be critical of the manner in which philosophical schools are presented in terms of essences and atemporal structures, thus calling into question monologic representation. Nevertheless, this does not entail a rejection of the *darśana*s altogether. Dissolving their boundaries, or making them more flexible— thus retaining the categories but more with a sense of family resemblance, using overlapping analogies and criss-crossing networks—still allows for affiliation, yet criticizes specific forms of representation. In fact, it is perhaps only with a recognition of their flexibility that we may simultaneously acknowledge both individual contribution as well as continuity of tradition.

4.2 THE CATEGORY OF YOGA

An important component in the formation and systematization of tradition is the use of definitions and categories. Turning to the category of 'yoga' itself, we may look at how various Yoga traditions use it as an interpretive device, a means for identifying the boundaries of tradition. Objectives, beliefs, practices, identities, and the like, are conveniently assembled in a condensed form that guides the practitioner and symbolizes the school as a whole. This is a perfectly legitimate and natural procedure. Names and categories may establish (or confirm) a partly unarticulated and tacit agreement that makes possible different forms of relations, for example a concerted action. In other cases, definitions may intend to communicate a specific idea or understanding, which then invites interlocutors to discuss the nature or import of a particular discourse or concept. However, a dialogical analysis attempts to uncover the elasticity of the category, both in content and application, pointing at alternative interpretations and questioning monologic forms of representation.

As Strauss (1997: 2) reminds us, "Yoga can be defined in many ways—as an attitude, a philosophic system, a set of practices, a way of being in the world—but its definition is always historically situated". In fact, delimitation of a category can be seen as the construction of a social standpoint, a matter of social involvement with a problem. As such, definition is inherently social and must be the first fact to be located socially (Dobbelaere & Lauwers 1973: 550-1). One aim of a dialogical approach is thus to 'tease out' the purposes involved in a specific situation, our own or someone else's, unveiling contested areas and tensions without destroying the capability of categorizing altogether.

Surely there is no definition that is right for all circumstances. We may rather approach a definition as being more or less accurate, useful, or even dialogic, depending on the context and purposes involved. In any case, the dialogical analysis exhorts us to include an openness to go beyond given categories and classifications. Emphasis on openness will thus enable us to avoid universalization or essentializa-

tion, and recognizes that theoretical perspectives most often, if not always, mirror alliances with different groups of society (Alvesson & Deetz (2000: 28-33).

Etymologically, the word 'yoga' itself derives from the verbal root √yuj-, which means "to yoke or join or harness" (Monier-Williams). Thus *yoga* may variously imply harnessing of the senses and the mind, the act of uniting or joining, or even the resulting union itself (cf. Whicher 1998: 7-9). It is however contestable whether this implies a union between the individual self and the supreme Self, an interpretation that is popular among Vedānta and neo-Vedānta followers (Whicher 1998: 29). Other possibilities of how such a union may be understood are certainly possible within the many diverse Yoga traditions, such as the union of mind and body, or the unification of identity. Some scholars assert that the metaphor of union has no real place in the system of *classical* Yoga (Feuerstein 1989: 26), though it may perhaps have such a place within other Yoga traditions. Considering the variegated semantic origins of the word, as well as the many interpretational possibilities and extensions of meaning, there seems to be no natural hermeneutic center that is shared by most or all Yoga traditions.[95]

Ian Whicher argues that, in its proper historical and philosophical context, Yoga traditions may broadly be seen as "South Asian paths of spiritual emancipation" (Whicher 1998: 6). However, this designation is problematic if we take it as a mono-thetic or essentialist definition. There are perhaps paths of spiritual emancipation that cannot be included within the fold of Yoga, and there are also important expressions of yogic (especially tantric) traditions that do not only concern liberation but also aim for this-worldly achievements. Whether or not emancipation is always the overriding concern is therefore not obvious. Moreover, emancipation may be understood differently depending on the circumstances, and there are certainly other important aspects, effects or functions not explicitly noted by the traditions them-selves, most notably issues of identity. Finally, it is certainly controversial to assert that for example Indian Buddhism and Jainism are to be seen as branches of the Yoga tree. In short, Yoga traditions may sometimes cluster around the notion of spiritual emancipation, though at times other elements or dimensions may well be of equal or greater importance.

In my view, Feuerstein (1998) thus underrates the internal heterogeneity and the contestable nature of Yoga history when he says:

> Despite the very colorful diversity within the Yoga tradition, all approaches are agreed on the need for self-transcendence for going beyond the ordinary personality with its pre-dictable habit patterns. Yoga is indeed the technology of ecstatic transcendence. The dif-

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[95] *Yoga Research and Education Center*, under the direction of Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein, has collected definitions of Yoga in several traditional scriptures. Yoga is variously deemed "control of the whirls of the mind (citta)" (Yoga-Sûtra 1.2), "skill in [the performance of] actions" (Bhagavad-Gîtâ 2.50), "ecstasy (samâdhi)" (Yoga-Bhâshya 1.1), "the oneness of breath, mind, and senses, and the abandonment of all states of existence" (Maitrî-Upanishad 6.25), "union of the individual psyche (jîva-âtman) with the transcendental Self (parama-âtman)" (Yoga-Yâjnavalkya 1.44), "unification of the web of dualities (dvandva-jâla)" (Yoga-Bîja 84), "disconnection (viyoga) of the connection (samyoga) with suffering" (Bhagavad-Gîtâ 6.23), "separation (viyoga) of the Self from the World-Ground (prakriti)" (Râja-Mârtanda 1.1), "unity of exhalation and inhalation and of blood and semen, as well as the union of sun and moon and of the individual psyche with the transcendental Self" (Yoga-Shikhâ-Upanishad 1.68-69), "the steady holding of the senses" (Katha-Upanishad 6.11), "balance (samatva)" (Bhagavad-Gîtâ 2.48).

ferences relate more to the way in which this transcendence is accomplished and how it is conceptualized (Feuerstein 1998: 36)

Jean Varenne (1976: 145) also advocates an underlying unity, thus viewing "specialized texts" such as the *Bhagavad Gīta*, the *Yogasūtra*, and the *Yoga Upaniṣads* as complementary to each other. Similarly, Werner (1980, cf. 1989) argues that Yoga in its "original pure form" may be understood as independent of religion. In this view, Yoga traditions originally avoided defining the transcendent in definite terms and therefore shared a common mystical core which only later diversified into different religious interpretations.[96]

But is there really an underlying unity, a "pure Yoga", only interpreted in different ways, presented in varying forms and applications? Does that not avoid the very real differences as to how transcendence is emphasized in comparison with other matters, and that transcendence may mean many different things? I do not see how we can speak of any "pure" forms without resorting to a rhetoric of authenticity, without postulating an ahistorical form of Yoga. But if postmodernism has taught us anything such an approach is indeed impossible without camouflaging dimensions of privilege and interpretation. The inevitable question is, who has access to this "purity"? It is perhaps possible to claim that some Yoga traditions involve *relatively* less 'superstructures'. This means that when Yoga is established in the form of a more practical orientation, i.e. not being based primarily on doctrine, this allows for engagement with a lesser degree of faith commitment. Nevertheless, as Sarbacker (2001: 4-6) argues, even a purportedly experiential phenomenon, thus comparatively lacking religious or doctrinal "superstructures", presupposes some degree of commitment, being a concrete manifestation of beliefs and attitudes. In any case, whatever we may think of the relation between theory and practice, the history and development of yoga traditions cannot be generalized on a claim of "purity" or underlying unity.

The Hindu yogic traditions have often been divided into various branches, such as *rāja-, jñāna-, bhakti-, karma-, mantra-* and *haṭha-yoga* (see e.g. Feuerstein 1998: 36).[97]

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[96] Apparently Werner takes the idea of a "yoga pur" from La Vallé Poussin. This entails the conception that yoga, as a practical discipline, may be wedded to different philosophical systems (Sarbacker 2001: 113). Also compare Georg Feuerstein's article "Hindu Yoga, Buddhist Yoga, Jaina Yoga", in which he contends that in its broadest sense, Yoga is simply spiritual practice, or spirituality: "It is India's version of what has long been known as 'mysticism' in Christianity, 'Kabbalah' in Judaism, and 'Sufism' in Islam. Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as Jainism, are all yogic cultures or traditions. That is to say, these cultures are at heart spiritual: They acknowledge and promote the age-old ideal of liberation (moksha), however it may be conceived. Yoga has from the beginning been a liberation teaching (moksha-shâstra), and as such has shaped Hinduism, Buddhism, and also Jainism." (See http://www.yrec.org/3yoga.html). I will attempt to show that conceptions such as these tend to conflate distinct uses of the category 'yoga' in order to claim universality and homogeneity.

[97] *Kuṇḍalinī-* and *laya-yoga* are often closely associated with *haṭha-yoga*, or subsumed under Tantric Yoga. The *Bhagavadgīta* is the *locus classicus* for "organizing" Yoga according to various styles or orientations. Also the *Yoga Upaniṣads* similarly divide yogic styles. See "The Branches of Yoga" by Prem Prakash (at http://www.yrec.org/branches.html) for a typical "explanation" of various orientations. For example, he contends that "there are several branches of Yoga traditionally cited as valid approaches to the goal of Self-realization. Yoga, in its fullest sense, however, is not so much a tree with different branches, as it is a comprehensive spiritual art that takes into account the varied needs of different individuals, and even the same individual at different times. As Sri Krishna Prem so eloquently stated, Yoga is not a synthesis of all the separate branches of the tradition; it is the prior and undivided whole of which the branches represent partial formations."

In this classification the term yoga is used in a more generic sense, meaning anything from an integrative discipline to a path (*mārga*) to spiritual fulfillment or simply a 'system'. This explains why the term 'yoga' often lends itself to being a generic, classificatory term for an array of often irreconcilable traditions or schools. This usage should however be distinguished from more specialized use, as e.g. in classical Yoga, which refers more to a specific theory-cum-practice (Lipner 1994: 303).

The terms classical Yoga, *yoga-darśana*, *pātañjala-yoga*, and *rāja-yoga* are sometimes used interchangeably but with different shades of meaning. *Pātañjala-yoga* ("The Yoga of Patañjali") is often distinctively associated with the eightfold (*aṣṭāṅga*) system as explicated in the *Yogasūtra*. It has however been argued that the *Yogasūtra* contains several systems of Yoga. Georg Feuerstein (1980) has even claimed that *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* was in fact consciously cited by Patañjali. Instead, he maintains, it is *kriyā-yoga* that is the core of classical Yoga. These terms, then, must be approached with due caution.

The term *rāja-yoga* ("Royal Yoga") came in vogue in the 16th century to claim its superiority over *haṭha-yoga*,[98] thus emphasizing the techniques of meditative practice and dispassion, in contrast with *haṭha-yoga* ("The Forceful Yoga")[99], which is more focused on developing the body's potential, "cultivating an adamantine body" (Feuerstein 1998: 37-8).[100] In my view, these terms can on the one hand be used as denoting quasi-independent 'schools', thus referring to historical phenomena connected to specific texts and thinkers (Patañjali and Gorakhnāth respectively), sets of practices and commentarial traditions. On the other hand, they may also be understood as orientations, revolving around certain themes of spirituality. In fact, much of the literature on Hindu Yoga traditions reflect the ambivalent use of these terms, thus unconsciously oscillating between usages.

The term *Yoga-darśana* ("View of Yoga") places classical Yoga as one of six orthodox systems in Brāhmaṇic philosophy. Many contemporary Haṭha Yoga traditions claim to genuinely represent *yoga-darśana*, albeit in different ways, a term which thus particularly well exemplifies the ambivalence of continuity and reinterpretation.

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[98] See also King (1999a: 72), who notices that even the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* (IV.79) claims that Rāja Yoga is indespensable to Haṭha Yoga practice. For example, it is stated in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* (4.102) that "all means of *haṭha* are for [reaching] perfection in *rāja-yoga*" (Feuerstein 1998: 40, cf. p. 563). Also cf. Desikachar (1995: 135-140). Is this evidence of an early form of reformation, the continuation of Gorakhnāth's reformation of Nāth Siddha traditions, in a process where Haṭha Yoga moves closer to the mainstream (moving from the status of a peripheral to a central cult), aligning itself with a high-status tradition such as the Yoga Darśana, and which was to be continued even further by Krishnamacharya in the twentieth century? Note also the criticism in *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭa* (V.6. 86; 92), where it is stated that Haṭha Yoga does not lead to liberation, but merely causes pain and discomfort (King 1999a: 72).

[99] But cf. Feuerstein (1998: 437), who claims that the interpretation "Yoga of the Force" is also possible. The *Yogaśikha Upaniṣad* (I.133) also presents an esoteric interpretation of *ha* and *ṭha* as sun and moon respectively, "signifying the union of the two polar aspects of the human personlity, most commonly understood to be the male and female aspects of each individual person which are usually in a state of mental and physical separation and requiring integration"(King 1999a: 72). Haṭha Yoga is thus seen as establishing the union between sun and moon, the conjunction of the two dynamic principles of the body-mind (Feuerstein 1998: 518).

[100] See also Feuerstein (1998: 36): "the ideal of Râja-Yoga is to recover one's true Identity as the the transcendental Self (*purusha*) standing eternally apart from the round of Nature, whereas the proclaimed ideal of Hatha-Yoga is to create an immortal body for oneself that permits total mastery of Nature".

As we have seen, there is a tendency in both popular and scholarly works to view the philosophy of Yoga as an ahistorical phenomenon. In a dialogical approach we should however distinguish between various interpretational environments, thus acknowledging that the philosophical content of classical Yoga has continuously changed through history. Classical Yoga as a purely historical phenomenon, i.e. around the first five hundred years of the Common Era, is next to unknown. This complicates things, to be sure, contributing to a conflation of the historical phenomenon and its philosophical message.

The tendency to center Yoga philosophy around Patañjali's text veils the enormous diversity of its long history. This marginalizes disparate views that are more or less in tension with each other, for example various themes from Tantrism, the Upaniṣads and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*. Creative and innovative contributions are then suppressed, aiming instead for systematization and finalizability. By contrast, we may argue that there is no standard but rather an infinite number of microworlds of conversations and utterances, multidimensional arenas for discourses on various topics, *without* underlying unity. Although the *Yogasūtra* has indeed acquired a prominent position in modern traditions, we should not further reify the impression of an ahistorical "Yoga philosophy". By contrast, our purpose is to attempt to disrupt the impression of a homogenous history.

Definitions of 'Yoga' are often established by reference to one or several 'essences'. These are then monothetic and 'essentialist' in the sense that they propose some 'form' or 'universal' lying behind particular instantiations, "that which is necessary and enduring in some class of objects, and thus crucial for identifying individual members of the class" (Saler 1993: p. 81). This is a form of *digitizing*, i.e. treating categories as discrete units which are 'either-or' in nature. It creates a 'contrast of opposites', attempting to resolve problems of ambiguity and vagueness (p. 88). But such definitions usually fail in their purposes, simply because they can never be precise enough, or because they exclude elements that may be regarded as important by other interpreters. By contrast, so-called polythetic definitions are based on relative instead of absolute identification, "based on a set of characteristics, only some of which a system must have" (Wilson 1998: 158). In this form, different members of a category do not consist of a minimum of identical elements but share instead what Wittgenstein called 'family resemblance'. This lies closer to ordinary discourse and common every-day experience, building on the uses of analogy and 'more or less'-applicability (Saler 1993: 204-5). Polythetic definitions thus present "a network of predicates, criss-crossing and overlapping in their applicability to phenomena that we variously deem better and less-good exemplifications" (ibid: 201).[101]

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[101] Critics argue that polythetic definitions tend towards indiscriminate universalism (e.g. Fitzgerald 1996). Of course, an unbounded category must suffer such consequences if pushed to the extreme, but why anticipate such an outcome? Is skepticism of polythesis perhaps more an expression of analytic frenzy than a legitimate verdict of its applicability (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1991)? Rather, it is precisely the merit of a family resemblance approach that it can capture a characteristic considered important for any phenomenon without also construing this characteristic as a sufficient and/or necessary condition for the phenomenon's existence. The open-textured nature of a family resemblance definition—being without fixed, clear-cut boundaries, whose instances are united by overlapping analogies—may be valuable precisely because it can reflect that meaning can be extended in different directions from a supposedly 'common core' (Clarke & Byrne 1993: 11).

In *open* or *fully* polythetic definitions no one member contains all the characteristics, while in *prototypical* polythetic definitions one member "*does* contain all the characteristics and functions as the prototype for all other members of the class" (Wilson 1998: 159). A prototype refers to a collection of the most frequent features in order to reduce the vagueness of the polythetic notion (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1991: 191), and is not to be confused with meaning 'original model'. It should rather be seen as a 'standard' or 'typical' example.[102] Saler (1993: 206-8) contends that we should beware of reification, treating a prototype as if referring to one specific exemplar of a category, i.e. *the* prototype. Instead of speaking of a single entity as a prototype (which is more of a 'stereotype') we can speak of the most prototypical examples. Prototypical examples provide orientation, not boundaries, and "they allow us to organize our analytical efforts with reference to type cases" (p. 217). Consequently, it is possible to focus more on degrees of typicality than the presence of necessary and/or sufficient conditions.[103]

Polythesis is a particularly useful instrument for approaching a socio-cultural phenomenon such as Yoga, thus considered to be unbounded and open to discussion. For example, starting from the term 'Yoga' as a folk category (Saler 1993: 1) or historical statement (Robinson 1950: 52), we may then focus on deconstructing the category and analyzing its function within popular discourse (Arnal 2000: 30). Deconstruction should not be overstated, however, recognizing the fact that also a polythetic concept has real value even though it is open to dialogue. The notions of polythesis and prototypicality are especially helpful in delineating different uses of the category 'yoga', and examining the various meanings which it may involve in different situations.

I will attempt to summarize, amend and expand upon different connotations that are common with the category 'yoga'. Keeping in mind the concerns of polythesis and prototypicality, I propose the following operative definitions for 'yoga': **1:** any practice, method, or application; **2:** Hindu spiritual path (*mārga*) or orientation; **3:** disciplines of asceticism and meditation closely related to Hindu ascetic/renunciate traditions;[104] **4:** the quasi-independent school or 'tradition-text' of classical yoga, i.e.

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[102] Prototype definitions have been criticized for involving the problem of deciding the minimum number of characteristics that a system must share with the prototype in order to be included. However, as Saler points out, goodness of fit does not imply scalar membership (1993: 205). This means that we do not have to establish some definite boundary for classification in order for it to be meaningful, neither is it necessary that (proto)typicality depends on evaluative grading. On the contrary, depending on the circumstances it may very well vary when it is useful to categorize something or not. Indeed, when something is deemed to be less prototypical this does not necessarily entail a dismissal. Such an interpretation is more reminiscent of essentialism and digitizing: either something is 'good enough' or it is not.

[103] This partly departs from the idea of polythesis, as Saler himself acknowledges (1993: 218-9). In family resemblance there seems to be some notion of suffiency for a resemblance to exist.

[104] These may involve ideological features such as the belief that action leads to rebirth and suffering, whereas detachment from action leads to spiritual emancipation. Detachment is then to be achieved through asceticism and methods of making consciousness focused and concentrated (Flood 1996: 77)—"which are thought to lead to spiritual experience and profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence" (Flood 1996: 94). Primarily concerns contemplative techniques, often involving concentration on a chosen object such as breath, diagram or deity— i.e. the means whereby the mind and senses can be restrained, the limited, empirical self or ego can be transcended and the self's true

short for *rāja-yoga*; sometimes viewed as a theory-cum-practice, i.e. the teachings of *Yogasūtra* in conjunction with various contemplative or bodily practices derived from Hindu traditions; **5:** union—as in union with God, soul with matter, individual with universal soul, or body with mind—or act of uniting; **6:** short for 'modern haṭha yoga', i.e. system of practices focusing on postures (*āsanā*) and breath control (*prāṇāyāma*).[105]

These 'lexical' definitions depend primarily upon frequency of occurrence or "ordinary usage"—in texts, popular opinion and among practitioners.[106] An analysis of how modern Haṭha Yoga traditions define 'yoga' involves using the above definitions as a point of reference for examining and comparing how the traditions position themselves in different situations and contexts.[107] By examining how a tradition relates to these definitions, we may unveil contested and repressed areas. We are to observe how ambiguity (alternating between the different lexical types, one through six) and vagueness (more precise description of each type) are dealt with in a tradition's boundary-maintenance. I will attempt an example of how this might work.

When 'yoga' is used in a compound, this may variously indicate a specific form of practice or technique (e.g. *dhyāna-, guru-, saṃnyāsa-, samādhi-, asparśa-, buddhi-yoga*), a specific form of spiritual orientation (e.g. Vivekananda's classification of *bhakti-, jñāna-, rāja-,* and *karma-yoga*), or a specific branch or form of Hindu disciplines of asceticism and meditation (e.g. *haṭha-, rāja-, tantra-, laya-, kuṇḍalinī-, nāda-, kriyā-, mantra-yoga*). In some cases, usages may overlap with each other. For example, Royal Yoga (*rāja-yoga*) may alternatively be seen as a spiritual orientation emphasizing inner serenity and meditative absorption, as a style or form within the Hindu traditions that focuses on meditation, or as a specific school or tradition-text, i.e. classical Yoga. Similarly, *haṭha-yoga* could perhaps be seen as a spiritual orientation which emphasizes cultivation of the adamantine body-mind, as a style of practice that focuses on physical exertion and various cleansing techniques, or as a historical school connected to certain texts and persons.

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identity eventually experienced (ibid.). These disclipines were also progressively detached from the institution of renunciation, and adapted to the householder's life.

[105] Cf. Feuerstein (1998: 36), who distinguishes between independent schools (*rāja-, haṭha-, jñāna-, bhakti-, karma-, mantra-, tantra-yoga,* and Aurobindo's Integral Yoga), the more generic significance of yoga as "practice" or "disciplined application" (*buddhi-, saṃnyāsa-, dhyāna-, guru-,* or *samādhi-yoga*), and finally "a more specific orientation"(*nāda-, kriyā* or *asparśa-yoga*). However, I find it hard to accept this classification. Indeed, only Rāja Yoga and Haṭha Yoga may, in any useful sense, be distinguished as quasi-independent schools if we understand them as historical phenomena connected to specific texts and individuals, or as 'tradition-texts'. My account therefore differs from Feuerstein's in that I consider *bhakti, karma,* and *jñāna* as orientations and not as schools, whereas *kuṇḍalinī, laya, nāda,* and *kriyā* are more appropriately seen as expressions or styles of practice related to Hindu renunciate and ascetic practices. Moreover, I also distinguish between these latter styles, on the one hand, and 'practice' or 'application' in general.

[106] Note that I have also added the now wide-spread and common usage of "Yoga" as short for 'modern haṭha yoga'. In the West, this is typically associated with the Krishnamacharya traditions.

[107] The definitions that I have proposed are not intended as a definite or exhaustive list. Moreover, presenting this list should not give the impression that we are attempting to establish finalized conceptions of 'yoga'. The definitions should rather be interpreted as more or less unbounded categories, postulated in order to enable comparison and analysis.

The problem is that the ambiguity of these different applications is often ideologically exploited, allowing for a gliding between different connotations, thus incorporating various orientations, 'spiritual paths', schools and styles or systems of practice within the same contextual sphere. This creates the impression that anything using the name 'yoga' is in fact part of the same 'thing', which is not of course true. Moreover, conflation of various meanings and usages often attributes to a universalization of a specific interpretation as being the essence of *all* Yoga. In many cases this entails that various strands and forms are seen as expressions of or styles within what is essentially defined as classical Yoga. But such a view, which dissolves ambiguity by merging distinct uses, is deeply ideological because it marginalizes some aspects, homogenizes traditions, and eschews important differences. By contrast, a more cautious employment of definitions entails stating more explicitly what sense one has in mind when using it.

For example, Vivekananda further reinforced the division of major forms of 'Yoga' in the early 20th century. He focused on *rāja-, jñāna-, bhakti-,* and *karma-yoga*, and viewed them as variations on the same theme, resting on the same base and together forming the core of Yoga philosophy and practice. This classification veils the fact that the different 'paths' overlap considerably with each other, at other times they instead contradict each other, depending on their interpretations. It also, of course, deems other forms such as *mantra-* and *haṭha-yoga* to be somehow less central or authentic (Strauss 1997: 89). In other words, Vivekananda's classification veils the significant internal heterogeneity of the chosen forms, as well as promotes the homogenization that is offered by the neo-Vedāntic account presented by Vivekananda, interpreting the common denominator of these paths as that of uniting with Brahman. This reinterpretation, emphasizing only certain aspects of Yoga history, also fit into Vivekananda's nationalist agenda and organizational plans (Strauss 1997: 90). Moreover, Vivekananda merges the use of 'orientation' with distinct interpretations and schools, so that for example *rāja-yoga* is identified solely with Patañjali's Yoga, and *jñāna-yoga* is identified with Vivekananda's particular interpretation of neo-Vedānta. Instead, we would perhaps be better off to consider the paths (*mārga*) as being polythetic categories rather than self-enclosed options (then identified with a certain school or ideological content), and to proceed from the prototypical features of each one but expand on the differences and variations offered by individual thinkers and schools within (and "between") them.

In short, whether or not we can actually stop thinking in categories, we can always be more or less self-critical about our invocations of essence and identity, paying attention to their "agonistic, fractured, problematic aspects" (Calhoun 1994: 19). The dialogical analysis that I have outlined so far employs different tools for bringing out these aspects of categorization. This analytical method attempts to be receptive to the ways in which tradition is systematized and defined, recognizing the interaction between continuity and alteration. In the following I will take a closer look at the role played by identity.

4.3 IDENTITY

Identity is closely connected to establishing meaning, associated with ideology. How these research foci are to be understood and applied more specifically is a complex issue. Suffice it to say that ideology need not be interpreted as 'false consciousness', a

coherent 'belief system' or a distorted representation of the 'real', but rather as "the essential symbolic medium through which all social relations are necessarily constituted" (Gardiner 1992: 7). This means that if we avoid the charged meanings of the term, ideology can be seen as a condition for dialogue and communication, not as a hindrance. Neither need identity be understood simply as a social construction, a figment of the imagination as it were, but rather as the basic fabric of social being. In this view, identity and ideology are reciprocal and mutually dependent processes.[108]

Identity is elusive, being about 'I/we' and 'others'. It involves how we think of ourselves and others, and what others think of us. Taking action-oriented sociology as our cue (see Cohen 1996; Craib 1992; Kidd 2002), influenced by writers such as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, we may understand identity as being fundamentally negotiable and inherently fluid and dynamic. It is thus a product of agreement and disagreement, a process of becoming, being and (re)constructing. Identity may also be seen as intrinsic to social life and to existence within a society or community. As humans we are both individuals and group members, both active and passive receivers of our social surroundings. Socio-cultural structures, understood as experienced constraints and not as manipulating 'things', present limitations that nevertheless may allow for varying degrees of choice. Identifying with a community is a symbolic process that establishes shared sets of meaning and thus enables interaction. Culture is more a map of meaning, constantly changing through agentic interaction, than a deterministic order. It is a space or 'locale' that supplies for a context to actions, within which there is freedom to think about, reflect on and shape our identity. Culture can be said to dictate patterns for interaction, constraining and shaping actions, but also allowing for creativity and individuality.

In my view, a dialogical approach should maintain the epistemic significance of identity. Identity may thus be viewed as a generative source of meaning, useful not only as a source of agency but also as a meaningful narrative which creates unifying frames for rendering experience intelligible, helping to map the social world as part of a process of meaning making (Alcoff 2000). If the practice of mediating experience is always social, because we "share a world from which we can negotiate across our differences toward a fallible and partial but mutual understanding of the features of that world", this means that identities are actually the means by which we achieve knowledge, "a hermeneutic horizon that is both grounded in a location and an opening or site from which we attempt to know the world" (Alcoff 2000: 335). To use an identity, therefore, is to relate to a historical community and to participate in the negotiation of that identity. This is both to recognize the dynamic, variable, and negotiated character of identity, yet also to realize that social categories of identity often helpfully name specific social locations from which individuals may engage in all kinds of activities.

An analysis of modern Yoga traditions should recognize the importance of identity and its intertwining with ideology (as meaning-making activity), in terms of both social and individual formation. Such an analysis should be receptive to the estab-

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[108] Analyzing identity and ideology should not, of course, deny other important aspects or claims of Yoga traditions. Though identity and ideology may be indispensable to a social formation such as Yoga, this does not mean that they explain everything. In my view, Yoga traditions cannot be reduced to a sole cause or function, but must be approached in many different ways, using a variety of analytical tools.

lishing of oppressive identities as well as to the mythmaking activity of social formations, i.e. homogenous and monologic discourses of tradition and history. At the same time, however, there is often some measure of subjectivity or lived experience which is part of the negotiating discourse, and which must be duly addressed (Alcoff 2000: 337-40). Our analysis should also be sensitive to the typically religious dimensions of these identity formations.[109] In the following I will attempt to outline how a dialogical analysis might approach the issue of religion and identity.

For purposes of this study I am inspired by sociologist Peter Berger (1990) who views religion as being 'cosmization in a sacred mode'. Religion thus typically establishes a sacred cosmos, attributes to the 'universe as such' a quality of mysterious and awesome power, and conceives it as being humanly significant.[110] A common element, though not perhaps essential, is of course the belief in a sacred, transcendent or trans-empirical realm, as well as "behaviours designed to affect a person's relationship with that realm" (Connolly 1999: 6-7). Religious traditions may be seen as human institutions with several dimensions, such as ritual, narrative, doctrinal, material, experiential, and social dimensions (Smart 1997). They are often distinguished by characteristic kinds of objects (gods or transcendent things), as well as goals (such as salvation or liberation) and functions (typically the provision of meaning and unity to group or individual life) (Clarke & Byrne 1993: 13). Characteristically they also "focus upon central issues of human life and provide interpretations of birth, death, sexuality and drive" (Flood 1999: 49). All of these features need not of course be present in every religious tradition but are manifested in different combinations, ways and degrees.[111]

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[109] Modern representatives often assert that Yoga is *not* a religion. See for example the article "Is Yoga a Religion?" by Georg Feuerstein, who says "You need not believe in anything other than the possibility that you can transform yourself" (at http://www.yrec.org/yogarelig.html). In a similar vein, Iyengar (2002: 34-5) declares that all that is necessary is belief in our own existence, which in turn entails a wish to improve for the betterment of our lives. He also distinguishes between belief and faith. Desikachar (1995: 6) states that it is not necessary to subscribe to any particular ideas of God, "the practice of yoga only requires us to act and to be attentive to our actions." In my view, however, modern Haṭha Yoga traditions *do* exhibit quite a few elements and aspects that may appropriately be interpreted as 'religious'.

[110] Nomos, the humanly constructed order, is seen by Berger as a projection into the 'universe as such' and is therefore threatened by all the marginal situations in life, of which the most important can be considered death. But Berger's account is not without its problems. For example, what does the 'universe as such' mean? What epistemological commitments does such a notion entail? Also, the projection metaphor has been criticized for being rather vague and theoretically empty (Guthrie 2000: 235-7), and one wonders what it actually means, if it contributes to our understanding or only obscures it. Emphasizing construction-projection somewhat contradicts Berger's agnostic intentions, framing truth claims in a narrowed ontological scheme instead of focusing on communicative aspects. While it postures as an heuristic methodology it nevertheless exhibits secularist and atheistic presuppositions of contemporary sociological accounts of religion. It thus views religious phenomena basically as socially constructed, being causally dependent on social, historical and cultural factors for their existence (see King 1999: 48). Without adhering to all of Berger's assumptions I nevertheless find his view to be valuable and in many instances a basically accurate description.

[111] Braun (2000: 8-9) has argued that 'religion' must be understood as a concept, i.e. not as a nominal for a substance. As such, it is produced and not given off by the objects of our interest. Similarly, King (1999) claims that "the category of religion, in fact, is simply the production of the cognitive 'filtering out' or abstraction of certain aspects of a much broader cultural dynamic" (p. 10), and Flood (1999: 44) asserts that 'religion' can be used in a taxonomic sense to describe and analyze portions of human behaviour and belief. Furthermore, if the category of religion pertains to a particular history of

Religion is also a dialectic process played out between society, group and the individual. In a dialogical approach it is thus necessary to acknowledge the communicative aspect of religious traditions. According to Flood,

> religions convey through time narratives and behaviours that express values, yet are generally unintentionally communicative, in so far as most people in the world simply grow up in the tradition they are born into. Religions as systems of communication are concerned with the conveyance of culturally recognized, important information through the generations; information of binding significance for individual lives, which is articulated in linguistic forms, namely texts (and some would argue constructed by them), encoded in forms of behaviour (gesture, posture, body, symbol, ritual) and in material culture. Such systems communicate intentional meanings through language, particularly narratives of origin, purpose, and identity (called 'myth'), upon which doctrinal discourses are founded. (Flood 1999: 51)

Through emphasizing these aspects we approach a heuristic and analytical concept of religion that focuses on cultural interplays and transformations. Even if this may indicate a conviction that religions are "less about truth claims and more about identity, less about structures and more about texts, less about abstractions and more about tradition or that which is passed on (*Überlieferung*)" (Flood 1999: 47) it does not, of course, exclude truth claims, structures or abstractions.[112]

According to McCucheon (1998), religious traditions may appropriately be analyzed as 'social formations'. In the specific way that McCutcheon uses the notion—i.e. as signifying a process rather than a more or less stabile entity—this entails studying how human communities construct, maintain, and contest issues of social identity, power, and privilege. A social formation is an ongoing work of bringing an imagined social group into existence, making it appear as if it always existed, thus constructing the necessary conditions for shared identities, by using strategies for portraying the many as one and heterogeneity as homogeneity. Centrally important to how social formations are constructed, maintained, contested, and rebuilt, is the active process of mythmaking. In essence this is an idealmaking, where the

knowledge and power, as Talal Asad (1993) argues, and many with him, we ought to strive for particularity, referring to particular locations, settings and purposes instead of projecting universalistic dreams. Heeding their advice, we might say that the category 'religion' cannot be understood as referring to any object 'out there', carrying some inner core or essence (whether theoretical, transcendental, or metaphysical), but rather as a context-relevant and power-sensitive analytic tool. As such, it requires self-reflexive application and implies specific strategic purposes and consequences. Accordingly, we will treat 'religion' as a concept with fuzzy edges, not as a name for an object, and avoid defining it by referring to essential attributes. It seems more appropriate to refer to typically "religious" phenomena or traditions rather than "religion", thus avoiding the tendency to see an independent object instead of simply aspects of a cultural dynamic.

[112] Flood emphasizes that also religious forms of action (ritual, gesture, posture, etc.) are to a significant extent communicative, that they express values and convey a positioning in dialogical existence. Ths communicative aspect is then closely connected to language, 'myths' and narratives. However, this should not result in relying too much on texts and traditional doctrine for the understanding of these actions. There *is* a relationship between action and worldview, but it flows in both directions as it were, and so should analysis. To my mind, Flood (1999) also seems to overstate the importance of language and the centrality of the 'sign' in a Bakhtinian dialogism, perhaps because he relies too much on Voloshinov's work. Flood argues for replacing the philosophy of consciousness with that of a philosophy of the sign, but Bakhtin himself stops short of reducing consciousness entirely to language; he considers the sign still too close to the whole framework of theoretism (Morson & Emerson 1990: 205-6). This leaves the impression that phenomenology and the study of religious or mystical experiences is not thoroughly integrated into Flood's dialogical model.

ideal/myth is a "contingent, localized construct that, by means of rhetorical, even ideological mechanisms, represents and simultaneously reproduces certain specific social values *as if they were universal*" (1998: 68).

> A social formation is the activity of experimenting with, authorizing, reconstituting widely circulated ideal types, idealizations or, better put, mythifications, that function to control acts and sites of signification. … Moreover, these interrelated strategies of routinization, normalization, domestication, universalization, and idealization—all of which are ways in which significance is managed and controlled by means of myth and ritual—are themselves ideological mechanisms. (McCutcheon 1998: 67-8)

Mythmaking activity unites into a totalized representation "the epic past, the historical past, the historical present, the anticipated historical future, and the hoped for epic future in one narrative, behavioral, and institutional system" (McCutcheon 1998: 68), collapsing the historicity and specificity of each into one, monolithic, unfolding narrative. This means that social formations present a particular, contested viewpoint as if it were an agreement reached by "we the people", elevating certain meanings to numinous status. Mythmaking epitomizes a sleight of hand, where local worlds of significance are authorized and naturalized by being portrayed as universal, making particular and contingent views appear as ubiquitous and absolute. Religion is perhaps the pre-eminent site for creating cognitive and social continuity amidst the discontinuities of life, in the face of the various incongruities and disruptions that come with historical existence. Religious social formations coordinate discourses on such things as "nonobvious beings, absolute origins (as opposed to historic beginnings), and ultimate endtimes", thus creating "a system of socio-rhetorical strategies that facilitate the development of enduring social and self identities" (p. 59). Without hereby equating social formation with mythmaking it may be fair to say that they often do come together; likewise religion is often involved in mythmaking, but not exclusively or necessarily.[113]

In a dialogical approach, social (and psychological) entities can only be *partially* ordered (and never completely), existing in a world that continually clusters and unclusters (cf. Morson & Emerson 1990: 45). They are inherently processural in nature because their unfinalizable activity is essential to their identity. Social or cultural entities "resemble oscillating 'fields' a play of force lines rather than an assembly of objects" (p. 51). These cultural fields, however, consist not only of

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[113] Though I am in substantial agreement with McCutcheon's account, there are some inconsistencies. For McCutcheon religion is an aspect of human social organization, a product of social and historical causation, and not an uncaused force operating over against culture. As such, "so-called religious beliefs, behaviors, and instititions are merely a few of the many sites where social formations develop and are contested" (p. 60). But this, he argues, also means that religion can be firmly placed within the social world, "with no left-over residue that prompts supernaturalistic speculations" (p. 57). Though I agree in principle with the depiction of religion as participating in social formation, thus overlapping with other similar practices, it is not necessary to fully dispose of supernatural claims or revelations. To my mind he does not sufficiently take into account the agency of individuals (manifested eg. through revelation or experiences of the sacred) that may be included even in the framework he uses. This contradicts his intention to view the individual as co-participating in social formations, a dialectical relationship where agency and structural constraints come together in a complex process (p. 62). Also, religious discourses, as any other, do not necessarily have to be totalizing. McCutcheon apparently has an overly pessimistic notion of the possibilities of humbleness and openness, denying that identities and social formations can be non-oppressive.

diverse elements but are also shot through with multiple temporalities and diverse rhythms.

In short, typically religious traditions can mould or make possible various forms of meaning and identity. This need not be their only or even most important function, at least not explicitly, which depends of course on how we view identity itself. Because we are not viewing religion as being a unitary object, different religious traditions cannot be defined or reduced by referring to only one function.[114] It always depends on the circumstances and can never be determined *a priori*. Moreover, any tradition or worldview has different intersecting dimensions (Smart 1997). Though these may be approached by emphasizing communicative aspects, this does not mean we should reduce all dimensions to doctrinal, mythical or narrative functions.

In a sense, religion is one of the most powerful tools for establishing identity. In general, religion tends to favor the preservation of old content, "offering individuals a basis for reconstructing their identities within a stable or very slowly changing universe of shared meaning" (Seul 1999: 558). Religion thus helps the individual to maintain a sense of psychological stability through providing predictability and continuity. This may be done through objectification of various elements, summing them up in a transcendental frame of reference so that they appear more orderly and more timeless. Religious traditions often provide answers with a non-relativistic nature, effectively evading threats to the established order. Typically, religion contributes to the stabilization of individual and group identity by resisting change, affording individuals and groups more secure anchors for self-reference (Mol 1986). In religion there is a 'sacralization of identity', argues Mol, in which the otherness of the sacred paradoxically contributes to the integration of identities. Identities are sacralized in various ways:

> A transcendental frame of reference relates a welter of sometimes chaotic events and experiences to an underlying order which on the level of personal identity restores confidence and on other levels also swiftly repairs broken boundaries. Faith, loyalty and commitment strengthen emotional links between this point of reference and various units of social organization and thereby makes each of these units more cohesive. Ritual retraces the grooves of order so that integrative elements are not forgotten and remain uppermost in consciousness. Myths and theological themes dramatize the tension within and between the systems to which we belong, usually resolve them and thereby lessen their destructive impact. (Mol 1986: 71)

However, sacralization must always stand in a dialectical relation to desacralization and must be able to incorporate dialectic tensions. Even though religion works to integrate human interaction there is an inherent tension involved in such a project. Mol thus recognizes the dialectic involved in any identity formation. Because "identities are always proximate and situated in a jostling field in which they have to be capable both of cooperation and contention in order to survive" (ibid: 72), sacralization of one identity may simultaneously weaken another and the mechanisms of sacralization (transcendentalization, commitment, ritual, myth) may desacralize in order to ensure both function and survival.[115]

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[114] This is what Peter B. Clarke and Peter Byrne call 'radical explanations' in *Religion Defined and Explained* (1993).

[115] See Mol (1981: 66-70) for examples of how these dialectical tensions are played out.

To summarize, an analysis of modern Haṭha Yoga traditions should involve examining the role of identity as a generative source of meaning, as narrative sources of agency. This might involve typically religious dimensions of identity discourses, such as sacralization, mythmaking, absolute origins, and so on. It should also investigate how these processes are dealt with in terms of flexibility, that is, how the traditions manage to cope with tensions such as change and adaptation. Many of these may also be dealt with in terms of the modern predicament, an issue to which we may now turn.

4.4 THE MODERN WORLD

The increasing popularity of modern Yoga traditions can in many ways be seen as a part of what Heelas (2002) has referred to as a spiritual revolution, a turn from 'traditional religion' to 'spiritualities of life'.[116] In Heelas's account, traditional religion is typically institutionalized, involving prescribed rituals and established ways of believing, often accompanied with the voice of the authority of the transcendent. Detraditionalized religion, on the other hand, is the 'sacralization of life'. It is distinctly more personal and primarily concerns that which is interior or immanent. It typically involves the conviction that wisdom or knowledge derives from personal experiences. *Detraditionalization* is the shift of authority from faith in, or reliance on, that which lies beyond the person to that which lies within. It entails a movement from the establishments of traditions to the creativities of the spiritually inspired self. This process may be part of a wider cultural turn to the self, what Bellah has called the 'internalization of authority' and what Tipton describes as the 'expressive ethic' replacing the 'authoritative ethic' (Woodhead & Heelas 2000: 342-3).

In Heelas's description, strongly detraditionalized religion promises release from a wrong kind of selfhood, and, conversely, promises the best possible life (and self) in the here and now. 'Life' increasingly becomes the true meaning or value of existence, especially in the sense of an 'inner' realm which ultimately belongs to the individual alone. 'Life itself' is the key source of significance: "the ultimacy of 'feeling alive'; of self exploration and growth; of getting in touch with as much as possible of what life has to offer; of experiencing 'the quality of life' " (Heelas 2002: 371). These so-called 'spiritualities of life' offer practical remedies to be experientially tested, and they typically adopt a 'holistic' perspective which stresses the fundamental identity between the divine, the human and the natural (Woodhead & Heelas 2000: 2). Detraditionalized religion may be conceptualized in terms of interlocking forces and transformations, including

> a wider cultural turn from transcendence to immance; from an external locus of authority to an internal one; from fate to choice; from ethical principles to ethical experiences; from test by way of text to test by way of experience; from negative evaluations of human nature to positive; … from looking to the future in terms of the past to experiencing 'life' itself in the here-and-now. (Woodhead & Heelas 2000: 343-4)

Modern Yoga traditions exhibit many elements of the process of detraditionalization. This is perhaps an important reason for their immense success. In a critical analysis it should therefore be examined in which ways modern Haṭha Yoga traditions have

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[116] In my view, 'revolution' might be a bit of an overstatement, considering that in many parts of the world 'traditional' religion is still the name of the game

been affected by this wider cultural current, and in which ways they have contributed to it, or perhaps counteracted against it. Many aspects of 'detraditionalized' religion are conspicuously similar to what is usually called mysticism; particularly the emphasis on realization, personal experience, valuing the here and now, and so on. There may nevertheless be detraditionalized elements even within modern Yoga traditions, thus further reinforcing typically mystical dimensions and rejecting or veiling 'traditional' elements from the historical background of Yoga. Also, Heelas's framework enables us to detect phenomena such as self-sacralization, extreme or utilitarian individualism, consumerism, and so on—processes that may or may not have entered into modern Yoga traditions by way of a larger cultural development.

For example, the experiential aspects of Yoga are easily accommodated to an excessive self-sacralization when only those dimensions that fit into the modern, predominantly Western, conception of 'spirituality' are emphasized. As part of this process, traditional texts may be 'de-authorized' by allowing for highly idiosyncratic interpretations. In an attempt to go beyond tradition, philosophical debate and theoretical issues may then be suppressed in favor of a position according to which any interpretation that has pragmatic value (for example by guiding meditative practice) can be accepted.

The modern predicament may also have affected identity-discourses, and the ways in which modern Yoga traditions deal with these challenges. For example, due to an accelerating globalization there is a greater awareness of the variety of identities, of global differences, and an increasing emphasis on plurality and divergence. Such a heightened awareness of others may demand a 'profiling' or articulation of identity on the enlarged stage of cultural interplay. But the questioning of the boundaries of identity may also give rise to a process which decenters the subject and instills uncertainty, especially of moral judgments. This 'relativizing' tends to view identity more as a matter of personal creation, giving rise to less fixed (or localized) identities. According to some interpreters this means that identities have become more fragmented or fractured, replacing the dominant, absolute, or more rigid traditional sources. The post-traditional thus creates a state of uncertainty but also freedom from tradition, enabling us to locate ourselves within the world as a whole. However, this "forgetting of the past" may also be challenged precisely by a return to more traditional values (Calhoun 1994).

Modernity has disrupted some of the all-encompassing identity schemes, such as kinship, and brought an increase in the multiplicity of alternative schemes, situating identity amid a flow of contending and often incommensurable cultural discourses. This has resulted in an intensifying complexity, making recognition problematic and creating difficulties for confrontation or negotiation of identity claims (Calhoun 1994). However, overemphasizing the role of modernity or the West only results in a disallowing of local responses, so that the actions of "the others" are limited by "our conditions". Therefore we must point to possibilities of acting that exist even within these conditions, directing our attention towards what one does with modernity instead of what modernity does to those who are exposed to it (Thörn et al. 1999: 74). Homi Bhabha for example uses the concept of *hybridization* to bring out that cultural forms arise when two original elements meet in a 'third room'. This means that new forms are not simply the result of a one-sided hegemonic influence because resistance does not entirely depend on premises of the powerful. Hybridization entails

that traces of the old is still there and therefore is more akin to a translation that combines imprints from other meanings or discourses (ibid: 286). On the one hand our analysis of *modern* Yoga traditions should be able to show how modernity and Western cultural hegemony have enforced certain changes and perhaps contributed to exploitation or distortion. Rejecting or underrating change must be avoided, especially by referring to 'traditional' sources exclusively. Claims for purportedly 'authentic' identities often remain within a colonial logic, confirming and strengthening stereotypes instead of eluding them. On the other hand, we should also assign a degree of legitimacy to local responses and reinterpretations, being receptive to instances of hybridization. This approach is basically in agreement with the conclusions reached in so-called 'postcolonial studies'.

In short, our inquiry into modern Yoga traditions should be sensitive to the demands of modernity, often having altered considerably the conditions for social and individual identity formation, yet not resort to a rejection of reinterpretations *per se*, (due to their hybrid or diasporic status) nor to a reclaiming of the 'authentic past'.

How then, are we to understand the influence of modernity on contemporary yoga traditions?[117] Sarah Strauss (1997) attempts to demonstrate the relationship between Yoga and the changing roles of health and freedom in the project of modernity. In her view, modernity is a critical mode of relating to the wider world which assumes that unlimited progress is both possible and desirable.[118] Yoga, as a strategy for living under conditions of modernity, supports this concept as self-realization: "To 'realize' the self is to recognize the complete freedom of the mind, and this recognition is thought to then unleash the extraordinary potential of the healthy body" (p. 36). According to Strauss, modern Yoga has in significant ways been "re-oriented". This re-oriented version suggests to Westerners emancipation from material/spiritual dualism, and a way to get themselves and their environment "back on track", whereas to Indians it suggests empowerment, using an imagined shared history to create a progressive, self-possessed and unifying identity (p. 304).

The set of ideas and practices known as yoga have become a globally recognized bodily idiom, perpetuated by a translocal community of practice. This idiom resonates with the needs and experiences of people in many different cultures, transformed from belonging to a relatively small group of specialists on the Indian

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[117] I have deliberately avoided to define the term 'modernity', using it primarily as a general term for more or less contemporary (ca. 20th century) cultural changes. Without presupposing that modernity is a singular phenomenon, there being many different versions and interpretations of it, I only wish to acknowledge that there quite possibly *have* been certain changes. For the sake of this study it is not necessary to go into detail as to what these might entail, though it will certainly be required when conducting my own analysis of how 'modernity' might have affected modern Yoga traditions. Here I simply want to present the problem itself, in very general terms. Consequently, in the following review of Strauss's work I have specifically pointed out how *she* uses the concept of 'modernity', though I do not necessarily sympathize with all her accounts.

[118] In her assessment of modernity Strauss includes *reflexivity, individualization* or emphasis on *self-actualization*, and *global interdependence* and translocal effects: "These three characteristic aspects of late modernity are accompanied by an increasing sense of risk, the consequence of living in a science-dominated society which valorizes the control of self and environment, and is forced to reflexively incorporate knowledge about the effects of these various control efforts on future outcomes" (p. 290). She also notices the links between "middle-class" lifestyle and "modernity" (p. 38), the preoccupation with personal health and fitness as well as with ecological health of the planet, encompassing both ends of modernity's personal/global spectrum (p. 304).

sub-continent: "This modern transformation represents a shift from regional, specialized religious discourse and practice geared toward liberation of the self from the endless cycle of lives, to a transnational, secular, socially-critical ideology and practice aimed at freedom to achieve personal well-being" (pp. 63-4). In this rein-vented version, Yoga provides for a methodology for remaking the world according to a progressive utopian vision and a methodology for living a good life (p. 304). Indeed, the contemporary forms of yoga are thoroughly compatible with the basic orientation of modernity:

> … they provide a way to navigate modernity's dangerous waters without succumbing to the undertow of materialist excess: such a shift from the traditional ascetic practice of withdrawing from society in order to achieve enlightenment to a more participatory norm is made possible by valorization of the status of jivanmukti, living liberation. (Strauss 1997: 38)

Yoga re-oriented is *new* theory with *old* practice. It offers a way to become part of a community of practice, "a framework for individuals seeking emancipation from the bonds of emergent modern society's materialism through a simplified interpreta-tion and re-orientation of yoga" (Strauss 1997: 304-5). This is "a dislocated/translocal community whose basis for association is the practical quest for a good and healthy life" (ibid: 110). The community is imagined in that the majority of members will never know or meet most of their fellow-members, yet there exists an image of their communion. It is translocal in that membership includes persons from various nations and regions, but without implying a well-defined group or socially visible boundaries. It does however imply participation in an activity system about which participants share certain understandings. The multitude of communities are linked together through their sharing of a lexicon of practices with variably overlapping interpretations of these acts. It is precisely through the sharing of practices that shared meaning is achieved. For most practitioners Yoga is a way of living *in* this world, of staying healthy in order to improve the quality and length of life (pp. 21-7).

Generally, many Yoga practitioners see themselves as holding an alternative value orientation, shifting to a 'postmaterialist' worldview and more ecologically consistent values. Many believe in a sort of "best of all worlds" synthesis, using the removal of "toxins" as a primary metaphor, which may include everything from non-tangible stress to pollution (pp. 163-4). Strauss views this as an "almost hyper-progressive utopian mindset: to believe that it is possible to distill the benefits of modern technology and ideology, leaving the residue of toxic waste, material and ideological, behind—or better yet, making it vanish completely" (p. 165). These post-materialist values tend toward a cosmopolitan type of identity, the people involved are often constantly moving around. "In its global manifestations, we can view yoga as ideology, practice, lifestyle, metaphor, commodity, and generator of a Turnerian emotive communitas which has come to substitute for the physically-grounded communal co-presence now available only in fits and spurts, filling in the interstices of modern cosmopolitan lives" (Strauss 1997: 222).

Strauss (1997: 259-261, 283) likens modern yoga to the ecology movement. Both use the language of health and illness, professing a holistic approach that rejects dichotomous structures. They have in common the ideas of *universality* ("the making of a category large enough to encompass any opposition"), emphasis on *spirituality* rather than religion (the sentiment underlying religion but not bound to context or

content), an explicit link between the level of the *person* and that of the whole *planet* or cosmos, and a *praxis orientation*. Also the notions of "connection" and "balance" forges this link between the movements. In yoga, these views are also supported by neo-Vedāntic philosophy as a rationale for a return to an ecological worldview.

I have chosen to extensively review Strauss's work because it is probably the most comprehensive study of contemporary yoga traditions to date, though considerably biased in the Shivananda traditions. A study of the other major branch of modern yoga, the Krishnamacharya lineage, is therefore an essential and overdue corrective. Though Strauss's study is invaluable as a starting point many of her conclusions are colored by the bias, as well as being problematic in a few other aspects. For example, Strauss tends to interpret the valorization of living liberation (*jīvanmukti*) and individual health or empowerment as a modern response *in itself*, which of course is not altogether true.

In general, Strauss is inclined to view modern yoga as an instance of temporal disrupture rather than being part of a continuous manifestation of dialogue and hybridization. But the movement from passive to active orientations in the notions of freedom and health, or the emphasis on personal empowerment and self-possession rather than ultimate release, is only a thoroughly modern innovation if one has already imagined historical Yoga traditions as being exclusively about passivity, ascesis and utter transcendence from the world. In fact, Strauss resorts to classic orientalist and essentialist material when she avers that earlier on yoga belonged to the "domain of isolated ascetics", and that the "concept of responsibility to help others" is absent from Patañjali's view (p. 149). This is not only overly speculative and patently false, but also disregards the dialogical dimensions of yoga traditions. In my view, and to reiterate, we should avoid polarizing interpretive tensions as being situated on different sides of an imagined turning-point in time, but instead critically assess patterns of emphasis, reformulation and tendencies to monologization without at the same time simplifying and reducing these to disconnected chronology.

Grinshpon (1997) argues that so-called 'neo-Yoga' emphasizes the interpretation of the *Yogasūtra* in the light of the concepts of experience and observation. He mentions Vivekananda, I.K. Taimni and Bhagwan Rajneesh (Osho) as examples of this approach; "the essential tendency is to shift the import of the *Yogasūtra* into 'inner space' and interpret the *Yogasūtra* in the light of modern traditions such as physics, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, etc." (p. 565, n. 25). In this view, neo-Yoga evinces a significant theoretical shift, the repositioning from logico-philosophical arguments to experiential and scientific frameworks. Though I agree that it is important to recognize alterations of emphasis and differences in style, I nevertheless find Grinshpon's account problematic.

It is perhaps true that modern Haṭha Yoga traditions have re-evaluated the *Yogasūtra*, especially by emphasizing a therapeutic approach and by reinterpreting notions such as freedom and health. It is however not so easy to claim that these elements have not been present earlier, albeit in a different form. This indicates more an instance of hybridization than total rupture. Grinshpon generalizes the ritual-scholastic dimensions of older traditions at the expense of experiential and ecstatic dimensions, thus unfortunately polarizing a field of tension which, it may be argued, has played an important part throughout the history of Yoga. Indeed, the distinction

between experience-oriented approaches, those placing a premium on for example meditation, and scholastic or clerical approaches, is perhaps not diachronical but dialogical; the difference is not to be found as a simple rupture in tradition or history, but as a continuous oscillation back and forth, in varying forms and settings.

4.5   THE THERAPEUTIC PARADIGM

An important ingredient in modern Yoga traditions is the therapeutic approach. Modern Haṭha Yoga is often presented as being fundamentally therapeutic in orientation—to alleviate suffering, support rehabilitation, correct a dysfunctional condition, enhance physiological functioning, or balance emotions. Yoga is thus described in terms of its results, bringing physiological and psychological benefits as well as biochemical effects.

It has also been common to refer to 'Yoga therapy' proper, "the interface between Yoga and medicine".[119] Yoga therapy is an emerging field that attempts to integrate various concepts and techniques from Yoga with Western medical and psychological knowledge. It has quickly gained an important status, especially in the face of secularized culture. In the words of Feuerstein, "whereas traditional Yoga is primarily concerned with personal transcendence on the part of a 'normal' or healthy individual, Yoga therapy aims at the holistic treatment of various kinds of psychological or somatic dysfunctions ranging from back problems to emotional distress."[120] It tends to downplay traditional elements, introducing concepts and practices that primarily stem from Western medicine and psychology. This development is perhaps evidence of detraditionalization in modern Yoga.

How does the therapeutic approach compare to past forms of Yoga? Does it alter the goals and contents of the Yoga traditions involved? In Fields' (1994) view, already classical Yoga is a system of *religious therapeutics*, a soteriological tradition of healing and religious liberation. It "embraces meanings and actions that support human well-being with recognition of the common ground and cooperation of health and religiousness" (p. 1). Health thus pertains not only to psychophysical well-being, but includes also the person's spiritual nature, that is, liberation in Yoga is healing in an ultimate sense. Health can be interpreted more broadly as equivalent to attainment of salvation, of wholeness of the person in his or her true nature, liberated from limitations and from suffering—a reconciling of the physical with the spiritual, or transcending one's embodied situation to one's ultimate situation. Liberation is seen as the actualization of unobstructed self-identity and the elimination of suffering, achievement of the health of the person in his or her fundamental nature. While body and psychophysical health are of instrumental and not ultimate value in classical Yoga, says Fields, they have significant soteriological functions.[121]

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[119] See the homepage of *International Association of Yoga Therapists* (at http://www.iayt.org).

[120] In article at the homepage of IAYT (at http://www.iayt.org/articles.html).

[121] Fields's account is problematic for several reasons, though typical also of modern Yoga representatives. He uses terms such as 'identity', 'soteriology' and 'religiousness' in an unreflective way, not explicitly stating what these might entail other than serving as a goal and/or means for therapeutics, which is a rather circular argument. This also entails a downplaying of other important aspects, such as social formation, meaning-making activity, and the establishment of systems of communication. He markedly ignores the influence that the modern predicament might have on therapeutic notions, as pointed at by Strauss, and decontextualizes historical phenomena such as

In Indian thought there are many accounts that associate philosophical soteriology (e.g. classical Yoga and Advaita Vedānta) with therapy and medicine. As Halbfass (1991) points out, metaphors abound that compare the good teacher to the good doctor, and the metaphysician to the physician. Indeed, the notion of health seems in many ways to be common to both therapeutic and soteriological systems. The conception of 'health' as the re-emergence of freedom from disease—the regaining of a natural, inherent state of balance and harmony, an underlying perfection—thus offers itself as a bridge between the therapeutic paradigm and ideas of 'awakening' and final 'liberation' (Halbfass 1991: 250).[122]

But there are also important differences. In Advaita Vedānta, for example, the goal of liberation can be seen as an awakening from those very conditions under which therapy is meaningful. Strictly speaking, true identity and selfhood, the fundamental 'resting in oneself' (*svarūpe'vasthānam*), cannot be lost or newly acquired. It ultimately transcends the categories of acquisition and avoidance, and of means and ends.[123] From this perspective the therapeutic paradigm has its limitations, in fact its fundamental premises are denied with regard to the ultimate goal of liberation. Similarly, in the *Yogasūtra* the goal is not well-being as such but rather freedom from attachment. Medicine and therapy are ultimately an integral part of the disease or nescience (*avidyā*) because they contribute to the illusion that one can attain liberation by way of well-being. "The therapeutic paradigm as such, together with the entire saṃsāric network of 'means and ends' (*sādhana, sādhya*), 'causes and results' (*hetu, phala*), 'acquisition and avoidance' (*upādāna, hāna*), has to be discarded by a purely 'cognitive', radically 'theoretical' commitment to the identity of the self" (Halbfass 1991: 257). In short, the metaphors of medicine and therapy are only valid precisely on a metaphorical level.

It is however also the case that there are a variety of relationships to soteriological goals in Hindu traditions, as Halbfass is quick to point out. In Tantric nondualist traditions, for example, there is often less reluctance to view the goal of liberation as something to be desired and acquired. There are also many other strands that attempt to combine and reconcile the pursuit of well-being with the search for ultimate liberation or self-identity.

Critical of the present-day adaptations of Yoga, Strauss (1997: 3, 43ff.) views the 'therapeutic worldview', as a distinctly modern phenomenon, which sees the self as a project for infinite development in the face of an ever more complex lifeworld, the

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Āyurveda as part of a purportedly holistic perspective. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, he unwittingly reinterprets the history of Yoga in terms of modern (Haṭha) Yoga traditions, thus avoiding the tensions between theory and practice, or between scholasticism and meditation, as well as between attainment and release, not to mention the countless other themes that are left out.

[122] Among the Sanskrit words for health are *svāsthya/svasthatā*, 'coinciding with oneself', being in one's own true, natural state. Śaṅkara mentions *svasthatā* as the goal of both medical and nondualist 'philosophical' soteriology in the introduction to his *Māṇḍūkyabhāṣya* (Halbfass 1991: 252).

[123] Vyāsa claims that *puruṣa* can neither be obtained nor discarded (YS II.15). This is congruent with the idea that final liberation is ultimately not reached through practice (*abhyāsa*) but through clarity of knowledge, which is nothing but the higher stage of dispassion (*para-vairāgya*), argues Whicher (1998: 178-9). It thus appears that "without the higher dispassion liberation cannot be attained, at least not by discriminative discernment (*vivekakhyāti*) in itself" (Whicher 1998: 179). This perhaps constitutes a subtle difference between Advaita Vedānta and classical Yoga, although they share a similar approach to how liberation lies beyond the reach of therapeutic practice.

quest to 'fix' the self as a response, in part, to an increasingly cosmopolitan world. Yoga provides a "technique du corps" for coping with the stresses of everyday life under the terms of late modernity, or even as a device for the individual to take control of health and life without giving up the status in mainstream society or belief in the progressive power of science. This calls for *flexibility*, "the bridge from health to freedom" (p. 49), the ability to change as circumstances dictate it, without losing neither health nor freedom. "The value placed on flexibility can therefore be understood as part of the quest for unlimited progress, characteristic of modern mindsets— that is, *progress* (defined as forward motion) can only be achieved if one is capable of adapting to accommodate 'changing times'" (Strauss 1997: 180).

A dialogical analysis should attempt to examine the tension-field that consists of therapeutic and soteriological conceptions, and focus on how these are exhibited and played out in modern Haṭha Yoga traditions. This may well be done without simplifying the heterogeneous and ambiguous conceptions of freedom, health and liberation that abound throughout the history of Yoga (as Strauss and Fields tend to). Though classical Yoga perhaps emphasizes a transcendence of the therapeutic paradigm, stressing the ultimate incompatibility between striving for well-being and giving up attachment (Halbfass 1991), there are also examples within Yoga that attempt to integrate them with each other, perhaps in the form of a 'religious therapeutics' (Fields 1994). We should also be receptive as to how modern values and cultural changes may have affected or altered interpretations of the connection between health and freedom (Strauss 1997). But this may be accomplished more by referring to processes of hybridization and re-emphasis rather than assuming that there are no historical antecedents that therapeutically deal with elements of progress, flexibility, well-being, freedom, and so on.

How has an increasingly globalized world affected the interpretations of progress, freedom and health in modern Yoga? How do the stresses of the modern life-world affect practices, goals and beliefs in modern Yoga? Have the goals of 'philosophical soteriology' been re-interpreted, or even distorted, because of the influence of modern (predominantly Western?) values and conceptions? These and similar questions are essential to an analysis of modern Haṭha Yoga traditions, though in my view there are also important historical sources to be considered when attempting to answer them. Moreover, in a dialogical analysis the relationship between modern and historical phenomena may appropriately be analyzed in terms of a tension-field that consists of several overlapping elements: soteriological and therapeutic conceptions, structured and unstructured approaches to individual development, a theory-practice continuum, and the ideals of transcendence and immanence.

5 MYSTICISM AND EXPERIENCE

Crucially important to an understanding of modern Yoga is the notion of religious or mystical experience. To be sure, such experiences are often depicted as being at the heart of Yoga, in whatever way they are described, from total spiritual emancipation to harmonization with social and physical environments. Although a dialogical approach might argue that they are not quite so foundational to all dimensions of Yoga as it is often claimed, they nevertheless hold an important place.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce a framework for the notion of mystical experience that will be useful to analyze interpretations within modern Haṭha Yoga traditions. This framework should be adequate for inquiring into questions such as: How do they understand the soteriological goal(s) of Yoga? How do they view the nature of experience, specifically the "mystical"? How do they define the "spiritual" contents of their own tradition? What tensions are evinced in various usages and interpretations of yogic practice and theory?

The following assessment is not meant to be exhaustive but will present some of the major controversies and issues regarding mystical experience, specifically focusing on epistemological issues as these are central to the Yoga traditions. The discussions of epistemology and mysticism, often having originated in the West, may or may not have *directly* affected the traditions studied here. Nevertheless, taking a closer look at these discussions might enhance dialogical analysis and uncover possible gradations of understanding.

5.1 VIEWS OF MYSTICISM

First we must say something of the relationship between mysticism and yoga. Defining mysticism is problematic, in much the same way as the subject of religion. We may however postulate that, in a very loose sense, mysticism has something to do with religious experience, variously defined or authorized. For purposes of this study, we may initially state that mysticism typically comprises *discourses and practices that above all deal with transformative experience or revelation*. In other words, I do not view mysticism as being exclusively about experience. On the contrary, I take it to be part of a continuous dialogue, often but not always in the form of a more or less concealed struggle for authority. Mysticism thus involves discourses on the nature and import of "mystical experience", not only the experiences and practices themselves.

Often mysticism is seen as comprising non-sensory and apparently ineffable experiences, said to be devoid of a subject-object distinction. But such a narrowly defined approach shifts the focus of the study of mysticism toward textual and renunciate forms of Indian religion. It thus occludes or suppresses other aspects, for example "the ethical dimension of the mystical, the link between mysticism and the struggle for authority, or the extent to which the statements and activities of mystics may relate to issues of politics and social justice" (King 1999b: 24). Instead, argues King, we must acknowledge also other dimensions of mysticism, for example viewing it as "the conceptual site of a historical struggle for power and authority" (p. 9). This should not however result in political reductionism because mystical phenomena cannot be explained or described exclusively through these dimensions.

Political uses of spirituality and mysticism may include the construction of 'emotional identities', then mobilized for particular political ends, or providing for "beliefs and practices for regimes of asymmetrical social relations whereby authority and dominance are generated and legitimated" (McKean 1996: xvi). For example, by adhering to a guru's precepts, and offering him/her obedient service, devotees/followers actively construct both individual and social identities. These identities may then further be infused with complacency, acquiescence, or militancy, depending on the political import of the guru's teachings and activities (ibid: 142-3). However, the Krishnamacharya traditions are considerably individualistic or 'privatized' in orientation, the political element being not nearly as prevalent as for example in the Shivananda traditions.

Acknowledging that our understanding of mysticism is often greatly affected by the discourse of modernity, we must tread cautiously. For example, in the modern world the public sphere is often described as being universally relevant and applicable to all, as "accessible, repeatable, quantifiable and empirical in orientation, and progressive by its very nature" (King 1999b: 12). By contrast, mystical phenomena are associated with the private realm, involving individual choices rather than social or political authority. But this exclusively experiential emphasis is the result of a predominantly Western development, reflecting "a clearly defined distinction between the public and the private realms, the rise of anti-clericalism and modern political philosophical trends such as liberalism, democracy and the notion of the 'individual'" (p. 23). In any case, the 'political dimensions' of mysticism may include struggles for authority *in general,* not only power in the overtly political sphere. It is to acknowledge the communicative and public aspects of mystic traditions, thus related to legitimacy, concerning issues of privilege and status, and so on.

Privatization of mystical phenomena, "the increasing tendency to locate the mystical in the psychological realm of personal experiences" (ibid: 21), emphasizes the cultivation of inner states such as tranquility and equanimity but at the same time mysticism becomes domesticated. We should therefore avoid overly emphasizing the experiential nature even of mystical traditions, rejecting the simplistic polarization of political or psychological reductionism. Furthermore, we should also avoid reducing them to preconceived experiential categories of popular mysticism. It would thus be a mistake, says Scholem, "to assume that the whole of what we call mysticism is identical with that personal experience which is realized in the state of ecstasy or ecstatic meditation" (1995: 5).[124] In short, mysticism is much more than a collection of ineffable experiences (cf. also Hollenback 1996), though typically relating one way or another to "religious experience".

Andrew Rawlinson (1989) has proposed a model for comparative studies of mysticism which can manage the intrinsic ambiguities that manifest in conceptions of the human condition, such as religious experience, practice, liberation, relation to God or divinity, and so on. Rawlinson claims that these conceptions can be ade-

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[124] Cf. Tola & Dragonetti (1995: xvii), who argue that Patañjali's Yoga contain the 'essential' elements constitutive of any mysticism, i.e. trance (*nirodha*), a method to produce the trance (*tapas, vairāgya, samādhi*), and the conviction that in trance there occurs a transcendent experience (*kaivalya*). This view expresses the conventional understanding of classical Yoga and de-emphasizes other important dimensions, such as perspectives on ethics, authority, self-hood, and so on. It also generalizes the phenomenon of 'mysticism' on the basis of a narrowly experiential conception.

quately understood in terms of two pairs of more or less polar concepts, what he calls Hot/Cool and Structured/Unstructured:

> 'Hot' is that which is other than oneself; that which has its own life. It is not something that one can have access to by right. It is powerful and breath-taking and is associated with revelation and grace. It is very similar to Otto's 'numinous'.
>
> 'Cool' is the very essence of oneself; one need not go to another to find it. Hence one *does* have access to it by right. It is quiet and still and is associated with self-realization.
>
> The meaning of 'Structured' is that there is an inherent order in the cosmos and therefore in the human condition. There is something to be discovered and there is a way of discovering it. A map is required to find the destination.
>
> By contrast, 'Unstructured' teachings say that there is no gap between the starting point and the finishing point. Method and goal are identical. We are not separate from what is, and so no map is required. Everything is available now and always has been. (Rawlinson 1989: 167)

These combine in different ways, so that we may speak of Hot Structured, Hot Unstructured, Cool Structured and Cool Unstructured approaches, together forming the four quarters of the religio-mystical universe so to speak. In my view, the purpose of this model can be to detect and analyze the various approaches that are at work in a tradition, and that stand in a more or less strained relation to each other. There may be combinations or partial fusions between the four quarters, creating hybrid or syncretistic teachings that are flexible and wide-ranging. In fact, says Rawlinson, "it is somewhat artificial to separate them" (p. 169).

Using the four quarters as a point of reference, an analysis of religious and mystical traditions can focus in on different themes. This may entail analyzing how a tradition approaches the nature of God or divinity, what devotional attitudes that are advocated, what temperament the teachings evince, or what disposition that the practitioner is encouraged to adopt.[125] For example, *Hot Structured* approaches typically focus on 'hot' initiatory knowledge, something which is basically granted and not acquired. The path is seen as an ever-increasing series of leaps and above all requires the exercise of will. Often this involves a belief in 'hot' magic (i.e. manipulation of the laws of cosmos in the service of self-transformation), a magic which is both necessary and powerful. Examples of such approaches may come from Gnosticism and Tantrism. *Cool Structured* approaches, by contrast, focus on the importance of awareness, which is 'cool' and dispassionate. This path is more restrained, the method is ordered and gentle. It proceeds by gradual development and requires the use of effort and concentration. There is an element of 'cool' magic—magical powers (e.g. *siddhi*) are optional and peripheral, they sooner or later appear but are incidental to the aim. Theravāda Buddhism and classical Yoga are typical examples of this contemplative path. *Hot Unstructured* approaches typically focus on the element of bliss. The practitioner repeatedly fails in his pursuit, but the solution is to simply ask because love is freely given to all who request it. Pure Land Buddhism and Caitanya Vaiṣnavism are stated by Rawlinson as examples. *Cold Unstructured* approaches, by contrast, focus on the nature of being. The truth is simple but very elusive. Similarly to Hot Unstructured, the practitioner is always failing, but the solution is to always try again by being open to truth. Advaita Vedānta and Zen are seen as representative of this approach.

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[125] In the appendix I have reproduced some of the figures from Rawlinson's article. See these for further clarification.

I have found this model particularly useful for detecting positionings and alterations, in very general terms, both regarding how the Krishnamacharya traditions appropriates and relates to other contemporary and historical phenomena, as well as how they manifest internal flexibility or tensions.[126] In my view, it is important to recognize that different dimensions are only integrated, if at all, with much difficulty. This is due to the fact that in many respects the different quarters represent incompatible or opposing conceptions. A tradition may certainly involve all four quarters to some extent, yet these are then 'integrated' more or less on the terms of one of them. For example, the tantric background of Haṭha Yoga can be said to be more of a Hot Structured approach, whereas Advaita Vedānta lies closer to the Cool Unstructured. However, in the Krishnamacharya traditions the ideals and temperaments of Haṭha Yoga and Vedānta are purportedly 'integrated' within a system that is typically Cool Structured, heavily influenced by the contemplative atmosphere of the *Yogasūtra*. Moreover, this Cool Structured approach is highly compatible with a secularized society, influenced perhaps by Western values and a modern emphasis on progression and individualist freedom, and is perhaps more attractive to the general public than an exclusive esotericism which depends on initiations and a close guru-disciple relationship. But this 'integration' is only carried out by suppressing or rejecting the genuinely Tantric and Vedāntic ideals and temperaments.

In short, the different quarters are appropriated and reinterpreted by reference to a theme that is rooted in a quite different approach. When a tradition claims to incorporate other teachings, it typically does so through the lens of its own approach, appropriating for example devotion (*bhakti*) within a different atmosphere and temperament than is found in other contexts. The dialogical analysis is critical of such integrations, recognizing that they are usually established through monologizing and biased interpretations. When modern Yoga traditions claim that they have a 'holistic' perspective, embracing perhaps the whole scope of the history of Yoga, as well as classical Hindu thought, this cannot be but an exclusive and biased appropriation of other traditions.

In my view, Rawlinson's model is adequate for an investigation of certain aspects of religio-mystical traditions. Some important factors are simply left out, such as ethical, political, and various socio-cultural discourses, for example processes of identity-formation. Nevertheless, it does enable us to detect different approaches to such matters as mystical experience, nature of the individual's development (or non-development), relations with the 'transcendent', and so on. Though it does not explicitly deal with the relation between authoritative teachings and more subservient discourses, or the tensions between ideal and actual beliefs, it may in fact be used for precisely that purpose—i.e. to unveil hidden or 'silenced' tensions and appro-

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[126] Rawlinson asserts that adjacent 'quarters' are more likely to combine (p. 169, 175), whereas diagonally opposite corners have almost nothing in common (p. 170). However, I am not fully convinced by this. In my view, a tradition may well pick and choose from *all* quarters, depending on the purposes and contexts, though typically rooted in one of them. Moreover, depending on the theme, it may also be situated in different quarters at different times, though perhaps typically clustering in one place. Research is required to examine in what ways, and to what extent, it may in fact be possible that a tradition positions itself by using contradictions and paradoxes (e.g. assimilating material from opposite corners).

priations. This model is thus a powerful tool for detecting processes of re-emphasis and remolding.

5.2 BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Sharf (1998) argues that we do not have access to the experiences themselves but only to the texts and discourses that purport to describe them: "Scholars of religion are not presented with experiences that stand in need of interpretation but rather with texts, narratives, performances, and so forth. … Any assertion to the effect that someone else's inner experience bears some significance for *my* construal of reality is situated, by its very nature, in the public realm of contested meanings" (1998: 111). Similarly, "a meditative state or liberative experience is identified not on the basis of privileged personal access to its distinctive phenomenology, but rather on the basis of eminently public criteria" (p. 107). Sharf maintains that we should approach mystical texts not as descriptions of experiences but as prescriptive systematizations of textual material (1995: 236).

But it seems that Sharf is willing to go further than is perhaps necessary.[127] Do we now have to reject all connections to personal experience? Sarbacker (2001) argues instead for an alternative approach to the study of meditation in the context of South Asian religion, one which recognizes the validity and usefulness of both psychological-phenomenological and sociological approaches (and thus, we might add, textual analysis). Sarbacker attempts to demonstrate that there are connections between meditation and cosmology not previously recognized, and that meditation-theory exists in a continuum between scholastic and yogic application, a spectrum of scholastic and pragmatic interests, so that text and tradition is adapted to suit a changing social and cultural context.

> Scholasticism is not a "passive" endeavor, and may well have a sense of "experience" or "experimentation" that is common with meditative enterprises. On the other hand, medi-tative *praxis* has a doctrinal, conceptual foundation, however few the "superstructures" may be, that provides for its development as a non-discursive enterprise. Each shares in the other to some degree, but there is no question that there is a significant difference in the degree to which each dimension intersects the other. Just as you might not expect a scholastic to have a profound sense of what the fruits of *śamatha* [stillness meditation] are experientially, one should not expect the yogin who has devoted a more significant amount of time to cultivating those states to be able to situate their practices in the greater scope of doctrine in a defensible way. We have to be careful, however, in making this dis-tinction too strict, and postulating that a religious practitioner must be one or the other, when in fact they may well be both to a greater or lesser degree. (Sarbacker 2001: 133)

In this way scholastic theory and yogic practice may be said to feed into each other, the boundary between scholasticism and meditation often being fluid. Moreover, according to Sarbacker, meditation-theory may also demonstrate the tension between being a central versus a peripheral phenomenon in its social environment, playing different roles in different contexts. Charismatic authority and emphasis on yogic practices may thus become integrated into mainstream cultural conceptions and form a foundation for ritual observance. Meditation often plays many different roles, thus demonstrating the tension between adaptation and innovation in religious thought

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[127] See Gyatso (1999) for extended criticism of Sharf's views. Cf. also Sarbacker (2001), especially pp. 56- 63.

and practice (p. 3). A scholastic-based authority would perhaps rely more on memorization and conceptualization of critical issues, and on the ritual exchange of authority within the religious community (p. 157). This oscillation between "authorized" theory and "innovative" practice is perhaps part also of modern Yoga traditions.[128]

In other words, even more scholastic texts may have at least some relation to experience, and it seems more appropriate to view the tension between theory and practice, between speculation and experience, as situated on a continuum. Routinization is certainly common even with experiential categories and notions. Also, meditation is not antithetical to other types of religious practice, but instead there is often a strong sense of complementarity. This may be analyzed by looking closer at how the *Yogasūtra* may be approached in different ways.

Classical Yoga is largely dependent upon a relatively late textual tradition, but it is tempting to further reinforce its textualism by similar methods. Alternatively, we may observe the tension between treating the *Yogasūtra* as a unified philosophical treatise or as a teaching in "oral" style, between being an object of scholastic study or a loosely interpreted practice-text, though "even practice-texts can serve a more scholastic-ritual practice" (Sarbacker 2001: 133). Indeed, the YS may well serve many different purposes, such as recitation, chanting, oral instruction, memorization, textual and scholastic study, contemplative guidance, and so on. For example, Chapple has argued for the possibility of reading the *Yogasūtra* as oral literature:

> It pulses with an internal rhythm conducive to memorization. Like other forms of oral literature, it uses the cadence of language clearly to introduce new topics, emphasize important points, and bring closure when needed, exhibiting formulaic patterns and devices of oral literature. … [The *Yogasūtra* establishes] internal patterns through parallel structure, repetition of key terms, and a distinctive though sparing use of simile and metaphor. Devices such as rhythm and repetition not only assist in memorization, but also delineate transitions and emphasis. For instance, particularly long *sūtras* tend to indicate a greater degree of importance, and exceptionally short *sūtras* often hold palpable poignancy. (Chapple 1994: 86f)

By isolating separate aphorisms from each other and not look for larger patterns some commentaries tend to fragmentize the text: "the format of the commentary literally stands between the *sūtras* of Patañjali [so that] the continuity or flow from one *sūtra* to the next is lost" (Chapple 1994: 87). As King points out, treating oral teachings as written texts may involve an expectation of a higher degree of unity than is actually intended:

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[128] Cf. Eliade (1990: 174-5), who views the trends of the "speculatives" (*dhammayogas*) and the "experimentalists" (*jhāins*) as being two 'constants' in Buddhism. Eliade contends that this is the same problem as that which had arisen for Sāṅkhya-Yoga: which has the primacy, 'intelligence' or 'experience'? See also Samuel (1993: 5-10, 25ff.), who distinguishes between clerical and shamanic Tibetan Buddhism. Samuel argues that "the shamanic-clerical distinction bears some resemblance to Weber´s opposition between charismatic and bureaucratic authority", they refer however "to considerably more than a contrast in modes of authority within religious organizations. Ideas or cultural practices are more deeply constitutive of social reality than a purely Weberian sociology can allow. Religious forms create and shape the reality within which those who accept it live, and shamanic religion in particular involves the continuing transformation of such realities" (p. 361). But compare Ray (1995: 100), who questions Samuel's distinction and claims it can be more adequately described in terms of "clerical" and "meditatively oriented" traditions and tendencies.

> Writing speech down transforms it. In speech, once the words are spoken there is nothing left of them to work over. However, if speech is 'translated' into a written form it immediately becomes accessible to study, a greater degree of analysis, and to recontextualization and reinterpretation. … one inevitably imposes a degree of uniformity, consistency and univocal stability that may not have been present in the plastic and dynamic transmission of the teachings in their original, oral context. (King 1999b: 63-4)

Textualism often involves a "quantification of knowledge" and encourages a sense of closure, the belief that it is possible to give an objective and definitive account of that which is studied (King 1999b: 65). Such a decontextualization may easily result in universalization, as when religious or mystical phenomena are idealized and located within the abstract world of the text. They are then extrapolated from their social and historical contexts, furnished with an ahistorical quality not found within the oral tradition. So-called canonical texts are perceived as more important than what people actually believe and do. However, "attempts to establish a polarized opposition between 'ideal' religious texts and 'actual' religious beliefs drive a false wedge between two facets of the total religious phenomena, which, in practice, interact with one another in a dynamic fashion (King 1999b: 71). It is very difficult, if not impossible, to know what the 'actual' beliefs and practices looked like in the past when all we have left are scriptural accounts. Are we not obliged to try to understand the past through these texts if we have nothing else? Certainly, but only with due caution. We should we be wary of treating interpretations of these texts as objective and definitive accounts, just as we should be skeptical of claims to having access to a 'genuine' past. In the case of contemporary Yoga, we are surely in a better position to discern differences between ideal texts and actual beliefs/practices, as well as their interaction. This could very well be conducted without speculatively reading into the past. Research on modern Yoga may reveal insights important when doing historical studies of how Yoga might have been practiced or believed in the past, whereas the latter studies may function as a critical perspective on the former.

Sarbacker emphasizes that the *Yogasūtra* advocates several methods besides meditation. We might even assume from the structure of the text that "the foundation for the study of the YS lies in the commitment of the text to memory, a practice that in itself is surely transformational" (2001: 159-160), memorization perhaps having a deeper psychological impact and not just being an embodiment of the text. In line with this, Norman Sjoman (1986) has suggested an intriguing interpretation of the goals of classical Yoga, one which is basically compatible with Deikman's (1982) view of meditation as moving from the object mode to a receptive style of cognition. According to Sjoman, in classical Yoga wisdom is seen as a synthetic function of memory, the last stage of a learning process. Throughout the learning process the passive aspect of mind is emphasized as a practical learning technique, assuming that perception is passive and thinking is active (p. 199). The final stage of memory is a form of heightened perception or vision, an imprint brought about through bringing memory under control (p. 210). Memory is then eradicated in favour of (passive) perception (p. 206). In this interpretation, *samādhi* is a "function of memory" (p. 208), "transforming memory into a form of direct perception" (p. 210). Memorization is seen as a particularly efficient tool for enabling *samādhi*, demonstrating the close relationship between ritual recitation and meditation.

Beyond recitation of the text we should also note the ritual-based practices of austerity (*tapas*) and self-study (*svādhyāya*). Referring to the work of David Carpenter,

Sarbacker (2001: 160f.) notes that there is an intimate link between *svādhyāya* and the notions of recitation found in the Vedic tradition, a practice understood as a form of *tapas* itself. Sarbacker suggests that this connection to Brahmanical ritualism and pedagogy indicates the development of the metaphorical use of ritual as being equal to or even superior to literal performance. He also proposes that this practice evinces a numinous dimension in classical Yoga since *svādhyāya* is said to result in "union with one's chosen deity" (YS II.44).

As Olivelle (2001) warns us, the methodology in a scholarly investigation of an Indian philosophical text (*śāstra*) should not violate the traditional Indian norms of interpretation, thus adhering to the principles of logic and debate "rather than resorting to some vague inner experience of the author" (p. 680). Nevertheless, a basic issue in the YS is in fact the nature of contemplative experience. In my view, this means that the YS may only be seen as a *partly* speculative or philosophical work, attending to theoretical issues raised at the time. It relates to experiential categories and various practices without necessarily originating in all its instances with personal experience. This is what Larson (1999: 731) calls a "philosophical psychology", in which older meditation theories are updated by the Yoga discourse into a revitalized Sāṃkhya 'tradition text'.[129] As with any thought, school or collection of practices, there are more philosophical interests and less so. The commentarial tradition on *Yogasūtra* represents perhaps a more speculative and textual strand. It may be seen as a textually inclined tradition that lends itself to both philosophical debates and systematization, as well as practical guidance.

Considering all of the above, our analytical approach should be receptive to how modern Yoga traditions position themselves in relation to the tensions between text and ritual, theory and practice, knowledge and action. A study of modern Haṭha Yoga traditions should investigate how they approach the use of texts, and how they compare to past traditions. Especially important in the case of the Krishnamacharya traditions concerns detecting different applications and interpretations of the *Yogasūtra*, and in which ways this text is used to 'guide' the practitioner. A dialogical analysis would also be receptive to the ways in which 'ideal' texts and 'actual' beliefs interact or oppose each other.

5.3 EXPERIENCE

Religious experience is often referred to as an involvement with the sacred, which is however a rather narrow conception. It need not of course involve the notion of 'the sacred', either implicitly or explicitly. Religious experiences do however generally relate to something perceived as being transcendent, i.e. not immediately obvious or accessible. This 'transcendent' may then variously be conceptualized or 'affectualized' as divine, sacred, authentic or even ultimate reality. They also typically involve a transformative or revelative dimension, leading to the sense of a disclosure or realization of some sort. Consequently, religious and mystical experiences—for our purposes used interchangeably—are claimed to be noetic or epistemic, they open out to something, presenting themselves as an intuitive or quasi-perceptual knowing. They are essentially intentional, opening towards something other than themselves. But there are also experiences or states within mysticism that do not fit into these

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[129] Also cf. Bronkhorst (1984: 209) on the theoretical nature of the *Vyāsabhāṣya*.

categories. Being without content and intentionality, such experiences do not open out onto anything specific, exhibiting a kind of pure non-reflective or non-thetic self-consciousness. In short, we may speak of two major categories of religious experience, on the one hand *noetic*, and on the other what we may call a *contentless*, immediate or nondiscursive experience.

Starting from these general observations of religio-mystical experience, I will attempt a more detailed discussion in the context of yoga traditions. As Halbfass (1990: 379) notes, "experience" is a notoriously ambiguous and evasive term, with a multitude of potential roles, functions and usages making it particularly amenable to ideological objectives and interpretations. Moreover, the notion of experience has become a conspicuous and important tool in the encounter between India and the West, for many reasons. In many of the now wide-spread and popular conceptions of Hindu religio-philosophical traditions, experience has promised to heal the rift between science and religion, to transcend the dichotomy of the rational and irrational, or to reconcile the ancient and the modern. Experience simultaneously appeals to the modern temperament but rejects its commitment to objectification and quantification. Not least, experience "is a device of reinterpretation and cultural self-affirmation, which serves to defend the Indian tradition against charges of mysticism and irrationalism" (Halbfass 1990: 401). Heeding Halbfass' advice, we may attempt to unveil the vague rhetoric and often deliberate blurring of conceptual distinctions in using 'experience' as a referent.

Robert Sharf (1995, 1998) has taken this challenge seriously and probed deeply into the way South-Asian religions use the notion of "experience". But he moves a bit further than Halbfass and claims that there is an inherent tension which makes it impossible to use mystical experience for the often intended purposes. Sharf maintains that to the extent one refers to the *immediacy* of an experience one also undermines the possibility to discursive truth claims:

> Thus, while experience – construed as that which is "immediately present" – may indeed be both irrefutable and indubitable, we must remember that whatever epistemological certainty experience may offer is gained only at the expense of any possible discursive meaning or signification. (Sharf 1998: 114)

Though Sharf admirably exposes the logical tensions between immediacy of experience and discursive meaning, thus clarifying what he calls "the rhetoric of experience", he then overstates his case and rejects immediate experience altogether. King (1999b) however wishes to separate truth claims from the possibility to attain unconditioned and pure experiences: "The study of mystical experiences does not require us to accept … that 'true reality' is given in the 'immediately given presence of primitive experience', only that such unmediated experiences do happen (whatever their truth-claiming status)" (p. 179). In fact, to *a priori* deny such a possibility is to subvert the central tenet of many mystical traditions (ibid: 182)

In short, though we should be aware of the inherent tensions in using notions of experience to claim reality and truth, the possibility of immediate experiences should not be disposed of altogether. To maintain a dialogue with mystical phenomena we may criticize and clarify the rhetoric of experience, following Halbfass and Sharf, but nevertheless remain agnostic as to whether unmediated awareness or experience is possible, following King.

A dialogical approach to selfhood makes possible a variety of interpretations of the relation between contextuality and experience. In short, it attempts to investigate how the tension between immediate and mediated experience, or between innovation and conditioning, is played out and dealt with. Within Yoga traditions these interpretations are situated on a spectrum, partly reflecting the dynamic between theory and practice, and between scholasticism and experimentation.

The debate over the nature of mystical experience is often stated as being between the essentialist (or perennialist) and the constructivist (or contextualist) camps: *either* mystical experiences are expressions of perennially existent and cross-cultural deep structures of consciousness or experience, *or* they are context-dependent constructs, produced by a mixture of social and psychological conditionings. Perennialism apparently overemphasizes the part played by a disengaged self situated beyond culture and history, whereas constructivism eradicates subjectivity and anchored experience altogether, replacing it with a system of relations or something similar.[130] Instead, we must perhaps include both subjectivity and conditioning in a more or less strained relation to each other. The dialogical approach attempts to introduce subjectivity and the possibility of immediate experience within a socio-culturally conditioned, but not fully determined, field of human action.

According to this view there is no place from which a sovereign self can act or interpret unbounded by culture or history. Such a conception would only presuppose a fundamentally monologic selfhood, without stating how or where it intersects with or is affected by other voices. Likewise, the completely 'constructed' or decentered self is never really capable of genuine action, since it would only be the result of replicating (or at the most re-arranging) already given structures. Thus there is no incitement that enables the self to actually *re*-interpret according to a partly unique understanding or orchestration of the evaluative framework from which action and interaction proceeds.

By contrast, the human self can be seen as a scene or locus of dialogue, arising within a conversation or a struggle among multiple voices, commitments, identifications, or points of view (Richardson et al 1998: 509).[131] In short, we may understand the self as *partly* decentered, "as 'permeated by otherness' and yet having a significant degree of individual agency and personal responsibility" (pp. 510-1). The self arises through assimilating and becoming a participant in cultural practices and conversations but at the same time exercising a high degree of individual responsibility. Thus "the self can neither be dispensed with entirely nor identified with a separate, isolated point of consciousness and will" (p. 511). In Flood's terms, this is a

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[130] Cf. Seyla Benhabib (*Situating the Self*, pp. 208-9): "The subject is replaced by a system of structures, oppositions and différances which, to be intelligible, need not be viewed as products of a living subjectivity at all." (Quoted in Flood 1999: 216-7.)

[131] Also compare the work by Hermans and his colleagues, who in a number of works have attempted to view the self as a dialogical narrator within a constructionist framework. Their attempts fail, argue Richardson et al, because Hermans never adresses the question on what basis moral deliberation proceeds. In the end, his version of the dialogical self lacks in responsibility and agency. I would also add that Hermans' conception in terms of internalized "positions" reifies the original Bakhtinian version, which instead uses "voices". Cf. the intriguing debates in a number of articles in *Culture and Psychology*, 1999, vol. 5 (1, 4), 2000, vol. 6 (2), and 2001 vol. 7 (3). See also Hermans (2001) "Conceptions of Self and Identity: Toward a Dialogical View" in *International Journal of Education and Religion*, II (1), pp. 43-62.

"self-in-relation", which entails the concept of a person as embedded within a socio-cultural context but also with the ability to act upon that context (1999: 218). Similarly, for Bakhtin "the self is an embodied entity situated in concrete time and space, and which is constituted in and through its dialogical relations with others and the world at large. This subject is certainly 'decentred', but not erased altogether, for Bakhtin places a considerable premium on human creativity, responsibility and agency" (Bell & Gardiner 1998: 6). This entails that "a rich understanding of selves must begin with a sense of people as free and morally responsible agents who are truly unfinalizable" (Morson & Emerson 1990: 175). In this case, unfinalizability requires that the self cannot be totally reduced to social conditioning.

In a dialogical analysis, argues Peuter (1998) selfhood may be understood as situated, joint productions, defined on the boundary of identity and difference, and constituted by the equal forces of synthesis and dispersion, order and disarray. The concept of 'boundary' may in fact be reinterpreted from "that which excludes otherness to the active site of dialogue and definition of the self" (Peuter 1998: 39). If we understand 'properties' of selves as being liminal—in neither the mind nor the text, but *between* interlocutors, real or imagined—then otherness cannot be mastered and overcome in the search for self because the voices of others are equal partners in self-dialogues. This dialogical model thus rejects the bias towards synthesis, order and progress by privileging the co-articulation of centripetal and centrifugal forces of selfhood.

In this view, it seems reasonable to assume that states of consciousness and knowledge-experiences are partly constructed and dialogically situated. Experience is both personal and socially mediated. Nevertheless, a radically different mode of perception, non-discursive knowing or contentless awareness, is more difficult to reconcile with a contextualist viewpoint (cf. Sarbacker 20001: 54) and constitutes a contrast. We may thus restate the debate between perennialism and constructivism as a tension between contentless experience (pure awareness or subjectivity) and dialogically mediated experience. Denying, or arguing against, the notion of a hyperrational and punctual self should not make us discard also the possibility of immediate awareness, the difference being that the punctual self is a state of consciousness, part of thought as it were, whereas awareness may be something quite different and does not presuppose a metaphysical gulf between self and world. Indeed, it might be argued that pure awareness is the only inherently personal quality of an individual, that the 'I' is in fact identical to awareness and should be distinguished from all other aspects which form the 'self' (Deikman 1996). In fact, it seems that Richardson et al tacitly acknowledge this basic awareness when they state that "we have a unique kind of immediate access to our own inner dialogue and experience" (1998: 511).

How is this tension displayed? According to Almond, "it is possible to hold without inconsistency that all contentful mystical experiences are context-related and that contentless mystical experiences, although arising out of appropriate contexts, are qua contentless context-free" (Almond 1990: 216). The notion of contentless experience is

> one in which there is neither awareness of the self (of normal consciousness) nor of 'anything' standing over against the self—a state in which, unlike the waking and the dream-state, there is no subject-object polarity. It is, furthermore, a state in which there is neither

incorporated paradigmatic beliefs or symbols, nor, *ergo*, reflexive interpretation, for there are no beliefs, thoughts, symbols, dual awareness therein. In other words, it is a state in which the distinctions between the knower, the act of knowing, and what is known are obliterated (Almond 1982: 174)

Indeed, "in so far as we are speaking of contentless mystical experiences, there is a unanimity and a universality which transcends the cultural context in which they occur" (p. 176). There are however considerable controversies as to whether the contentless state may lie at the end of a structured progression (whether cross-culturally similar or not), as is claimed by so-called gradualist models, or if it is instantly accessible regardless of any stages or states of consciousness, as is claimed by subitism.[132] The contentless state may be claimed to be phenomenologically identical, though the stages of experience leading to it do seem disparate (Almond 1982: 176). However, even if we grant that there are no logical problems in admitting the possibility of contentless states, "there are, to be sure, hermeneutical difficulties in establishing their occurrence from the analysis of mystical texts. ... we are still faced with the necessity of establishing the nature of any particular mystic's experiences by examining the retrospective interpretations of those experiences" (Almond 1990: 217).

The non-conceptual mode of knowing may well be an "innate capacity" of consciousness (Forman 1998), but "realization" of this awareness or presence is always brought back into the world of conceptuality (Loy 1983). Its interpreted meaning—its ethical content and its repercussions on the individual's acting in the world, thus relating the experience to conceptuality and "already populated utterances"—must surely be affected by social situations. Indeed, anything we have to say about this immediate awareness is bound to dialogical contexts, which also involves how we "use" or manifest it.

I am *not* saying that the contentless state is in fact the goal of Yoga, nor that it would then be the only important factor to analyze. On the contrary, contentless states or events have socio-culturally situated retroflexive interpretations, with any ethical or other import that might entail—though often mystical experiences are claimed to stand beyond discursive reasoning. As such, the analytical framework outlined here is highly critical of simplistic accounts, acknowledging that whatever an 'immediate experience' might mean, it must nevertheless be part of a tension-ridden framework when theorized. Obviously, immediacy may be interpreted in various ways. In the following I will give a few examples.

Wilber (1995: 600f.) views it as an immediate connection between the knower and the content of an experience, an immediate "touching" or knowing that enables us to "see" or "know" anything at all, however mediated that knowledge may be. Similarly, Kaisa Puhakka (2000) contends that direct contact and openness is the prerequisite for "knowing", an activity of awareness which "happens prior to its forming into an intention, prior to there being anything of which one could 'have knowledge'" (p. 15). In her description, direct knowing is not the same as an altered state: "Certain states of consciousness may facilitate knowing (just as others hinders

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[132] This is, admittedly, a simplification of the various possible interpretations of the sudden/gradual paradigm. In the Buddhist context, see pp. 32-52 of Bernard Faure's (1991) *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*. I do not know of any study of this topic within Hinduism and Yoga traditions.

it), but the coming together of knower and known is not itself a state of consciousness. Rather, it is an act that can occur in various states, altered or ordinary" (p. 12). In this view, knowledge is always possessed within a certain state, influenced by cultural or psychological circumstances, whereas knowing itself, being without contents, is free from such contextuality. "What is typically noticed are the content of mental images and thoughts that accompany or follow it. When the entire experience during the moment of contact is taken to be 'about' this content, a shift from knowing to having knowledge occurs" (p. 16). Puhakka therefore wishes to distinguish pure awareness (or presence) from ordinary thought and intentional consciousness: "Unlike [intentional] consciousness, awareness has no direction, no center of subjectivity and no intentionality or purpose. It has no form and no qualities through which it could be defined, and it is presupposed by any epistemological category that would attempt to define it" (p. 23).

Eleanor Rosch (1997) also maintains a fundamental difference between aspiring to attain altered states of consciousness and the deepening of what she terms 'mindfulness'. The goal of mindfulness meditation "generally is to develop (discover, click into) a different mode of knowing" (p. 190), training attention to let go of mental content instead of holding on to it. This is "the knowing experience of active involvement without an artificial observer" (p. 194), "a broader kind of knowing in which there is no private self" (p. 201). Emphasis lies on experiencing itself, not on the contents of experience: "there is just the knowing; experiences are 'self-known'" (p. 200). This is a form of knowing without dividing into subject and object; it is not located in time, has no content and is non-conceptual (p. 200). The relationship to ordinary experiences may be understood in various ways:

> Knowledge of the ordinary space-time, subject-object world can be achieved from this broader unlimited, accommodating, unconditionally valued perspective. … On the one hand, this can be seen as a new epistemological vision of the origin of experience – that relative experience is born afresh each instant out of the fundamental ground of this non-conceptual, primordial knowing. Or it can be seen as a statement of ontology – that nothing is ever born or separated from that ground when viewed from the perspective of the broader experience of totality. (Rosch 1997: 200)

Robert Forman (1990) explores what he calls a Pure Consciousness Event (PCE), "defined as a wakeful though contentless (nonintentional) consciousness" (p. 8). This is an event of "knowing", totally devoid of mental contents, intentionality and empirical dimensions. Christopher Chapple claims that this is what is meant with *puruṣa* in the *Yogasūtra*: the "unseen seer", a "free nonaligned witnessing" or a "state of nonreactive looking on" (Chapple 1990: 54-5). According to this interpretation, *puruṣa* refers to that ultimate point from which the individual views the world, also called 'pure consciousness' or authentic presence or awareness. This observer cannot itself be made visible, its anonymity consists in that it can never be exposed or disclosed because it is in itself observing.[133]

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[133] It should be pointed out that this interpretation understands *puruṣa* more in processual terms than as a subject or agent. But it is not at all clear which interpretation is in fact correct, and whether a processual interpretation—perhaps more compatible with a nondualist reading—dissolves the Sāṇkhyan philosophy that is built upon in the *Yogasūtra*. Cf. Whicher (1998) for an argument of a processual (and nondualist) reading, and Feuerstein (1980) for a more structural (i.e. Sāṇkhyan dualist) interpretation.

Oberhammer (1977: 136-8) has attempted a similar interpretation by analyzing the concept of *samādhi* in the *Yogasūtra*. He compares *samādhi* to *sthiti*, i.e. the mind's "holding firm" of a given state. Mind, or consciousness, must have a certain openness towards objects and *samādhi* is the steadfastness of this susceptibility.[134] This steadfastness can then be trained or cultivated, and in the highest stages of meditative absorption (*asaṃprajñāta samādhi*), *puruṣa* is realized, even if the experience is now no longer the experience of an object or a subject (p. 161-2). Remaining is only pure presence.

In a similar vein, Staal (1976: 141) has proposed to view *samādhi* as attentiveness or attention. Staal also refers to Deikman's (1982) notion of *deautomatization*: "an undoing of the automatic processes that control perception and cognition" (Deikman 1982: 137). Deikman points to another important component in meditation, "a shift from the object mode toward the receptive" (p. 137), but maintains that both deautomatization and the receptive cognitive style are secondary to another more important goal: "the centering of the meditator in awareness rather than in mind content … to enhance the observing self until its reality is without question and the meditator totally identifies with it" (ibid).

It is apparent that there are a variety of possible interpretations of 'immediacy', ranging from "knowing" and "witnessing" to "pure consciousness" and "authentic awareness". We should therefore be attentive as to how these interpretations are formed and how they are related to different aspects of modern Yoga traditions. Moreover, as already stated, we should not reduce yogic practice and theory to ineffable mystical experiences, nor should we reduce these experiences to one particular interpretation. The interpretation of a contentless experience is but one possible version, albeit a very common one. A dialogical analysis would attempt to explore in what ways modern Yoga traditions understand the role and nature of mystical experience. The so-called contentless state is one aspect to look closer at, 'immediate' experience in terms of transparent awareness or clarity of perception ('knowing') is another.

Moreover, there are different models as to how a contentless experience is said to be reached. A form of "catalytic constructivism" (Forman 1990) asserts that theory and meditative practice intends a de- or re-conditioning of the mind so as to reach a contentless mode of awareness. Meditation can work to purge conceptuality, freeing the mind from material culture. Even when conceptual knowledge is of assistance in pursuing a soteriological goal, the goal itself may be irreducible to the socio-linguistic context in which it is attained (Sarbacker 2001: 50-2). This is a form of deconditioning of the mind, of consciousness. Against this models stands a subitist framework, which in one way or another argues that realization is not "reached" by any effort or gradual process (also cf. Rawlinson's Unstructured and Structured dimensions).

One way to imagine such a deconditioning is as a progressive deconstruction of cognitive structures, reaching that which lies "beyond" or "behind" by advancing

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[134] However, it is only on the more focused mental levels that *samādhi* can be considered truly yogic. In Vyāsa's commentary to the Yogasūtra I.2 it is stated that "yoga is samādhi (*yogaḥ samādhiḥ*), a quality (*dharmaḥ*) existent in all levels of consciousness (*sarvabhaumaścittasya*) but which in the oscillating mind (*vikṣipte cetasi*) does not belong to yoga (*na yogapakṣe vartate*)". Cf. Oberhammer: „Zum yogischen Samādhi wird diese Beständigkeit der Rezeptivität erst … nur auf die Bewußtseinstufe (*bhūmiḥ*) des „auf eins Gerichtetseins" (*ekāgratā*) und des „Stillgelegtseins" (*nirodhaḥ*)" (Oberhammer 1977: 138).

through a predetermined sequence. The progression is triggered by certain circumstances, such as diminished sensori-motor interaction between organism and environment. The main feature, however, is usually seen as attention deployment, as in meditation. "Prolonged use of selective attention, effort, and pure awareness, and the development of these as attentional skills, are essential for activation of the changes" (Brown 1986: 264). The whole process finally culminates in that the most subtle perceptual structure is demounted and consciousness permanently released from its psychological make-up (p. 265-6).

There is however an important difference between decomposing the perceptual mechanism, i.e. the mind itself, and eradicating the *identification* of awareness, or some kind of self-system, with cognitive structures.[135] This is similar to the difference between asserting that the mind must be eradicated or whether it should be transformed in order for liberation to occur, whether the final goal involves a permanent transcendence of all mental activity or if the goal is to purify consciousness of defilements rather than to eradicate it, "the uncovering of the intrinsic purity of consciousness, which then shines through" (King 1999a: 101). King has referred to this, in a different context, as 'No-Mind' and 'Pure Mind' interpretations respectively (ibid).

To summarize, an analysis of the role and nature of experience in modern Haṭha Yoga should involve several intersecting dimensions. One area of investigation involves notions of selfhood, such as the privileging of centrifugal or centripetal forces, the use of narrative structures, a conception of a cohesive or sovereign self vis-à-vis a decentred notion of the self, and so on. Another factor is the relationship between subjectivity and socio-cultural constraints or conditioning, as well as how notions of immediacy are conceptualized or understood in terms of soteriological goals and practices. Yet another aspect is whether the catalytic dimensions of yogic practice is viewed as a de-conditioning of mind (a form of purification or transformation), or as a decomposing of the mind itself (eradicating the perceptual mechanism itself). This also involves an examination of subitist or gradualist conceptions, i.e. whether realization or liberation is seen to lie at the end of a gradual development (i.e. consisting of linear or hierarchical structures) or if it is instantly accessible at any given instance. All these aspects can be seen as part of a critical assessment of how notions of 'experience' are used, if they are in fact exploited for ideological purposes, i.e. treated in a rhetorical fashion by using vague and often contradictory statements.

5.4 EXPERIENTIAL TENSIONS IN CLASSICAL YOGA

Sarbacker (2001) argues that there is a paradigmatic tension in meditation-theory in classical Yoga between so-called *numinous* and *cessative* conceptions of liberation in the meditative context, reflecting the complementary operation of mental functions in the process of developing meditative absorption (*samādhi*).

> The *numinous* aspect of *samādhi* is tied to notions of attainment [*samāpatti, siddhi*] that are associated with the development of special powers of action and perception that co-exist with cosmological conceptions of deity. The *cessative* aspect represents the drive towards detachment and release from the cosmological schema altogether. (Sarbacker 2001: 197)

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[135] See Whicher (1998) for an extended argument that Patañjali only claimed de-identification with empirical consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) and not its disposal.

Moreover, the *numinous* dimensions have played a significant, if not crucial, role in the development of meditative *praxis*. The development of *samādhi* is often seen as a *numinous* "seeing" that by extension leads to the liberated state and thus cessation (*nirodha*), understood "either as complementary or as a radical disjunction from the *samāpatti* [attainment] aspect" (p. 197). This raises questions as to the primacy of one aspect of *samādhi* or another, and where the liberated state lies on the spectrum. This tension can be understood to relate both to pragmatic and experiential concerns and to issues regarding the role that meditation plays in a particular context: "This tension is further reflected in conceptions regarding the ethical status of meditation, the nature of the soteriological process, and the nature of the state of liberation ... a dynamic spectrum within which different conceptions of the religious life and different attitudes towards the world with respect to liberation operate" (p. 199).

The tension between these aspects or dimensions may be understood from a psychological perspective as representing the tendencies towards narrowing the field of awareness and broadening it. The *numinous* side of the spectrum is thus connected with attainment (*samāpatti*) types of meditation, referred to as "stabilizing", and the *cessative* side of the spectrum with cessative (*nirodha*) types of meditation, termed "insight" or "discrimination". *Samāpatti* could also be termed "cathexis", referring to control over the contents of consciousness, reconditioning as it were, whereas *nirodha* is similar to "catharsis", involving the perception and release of unconscious psychological content, the deconditioning of habitual processes of awareness. Catharsis may strengthen the ability to tolerate the unsettledness of a greater field of awareness and, by extension, mental chaos (Sarbacker 2001: 63-5). In a similar vein, Rawlinson (1978) has argued that there are basically two different types of meditative practice: the *absorption* kind, where "one goes into consciousness in itself, ignores the particular contents of the mind, and has no contact with the ordinary world", and the *awareness* kind, where "one simply notes the contents of consciousness with no particular desire to do anything with consciousness itself" (p. 273).

In Sarbacker's words, "the tension between the focusing aspect and the awareness aspect of consciousness can be said to demonstrate the bifurcation between figure and ground, the tension between fixation and relinquishment" (2001: 64). He argues that stability and instability may perhaps be viewed as complementary aspects of meditative practice, both forces being catalytic in the goals of meditation, feeding into each other and ultimately culminating in the liberative process itself. This may be restated as developing "one pointedness" in intensive (*saṃprajñāta*) meditation and "spaciousness" in extensive (*asaṃprajñāta*) meditation (pp. 64-6). The numinous dimension is the penetration into successively intensive dimensions of consciousness and the unconscious, whereas the cessative dimension attempts to recognize the pure lucidity of unconditioned consciousness and thereby break the cycle of existence (pp. 68-9).[136]

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[136] It is important to note that these types of meditation, and their accompanying experiences, are not to be seen as clear-cut categories. They may be variously conceptualized, practiced, and situated, depending on a variety of factors, also within a tradition such as classical Yoga. From one perspective, the tension between attainment and cessation may be seen as being between reaching altered states of consciousness, thus benefiting from the psychosomatic attainments accompanying them, and "discovering" the basic condition for all states of consciousness, that of presence or awareness itself. But we could also restate it more loosely as being between "mundane perfection" and

There are also other scholars who have interpreted the meditative practices as presented in classical Yoga. Oberhammer (1977), for example, has suggested that there are four complementary meditative structures presented in the *Yogasūtra*, distinguishing between cessative meditation (*nirodha*), a theistic variant of this meditation (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*), attainments (*samāpatti*), and meditative concentration (*saṃyama*).[137] He further argues that they were originally distinct traditions, deliberately integrated by Patañjali (p. 134). In a similar vein, Frauwallner (1973: 336-348) delineates two paths in the YS, *nirodha-yoga* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. The former is said to represent a more negative approach, aspiring to eradicate all mental activity, whereas the latter more optimistically attempts to elevate mentality to higher levels of insight. In *nirodha-yoga* one seeks to reach liberation directly through suppressing activities of the mind and thus untying the bonds between mind and soul. In *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, liberation is attained by being able to distinguish between soul (*puruṣa*) and mind (*citta*) through gaining the highest knowledge (p. 344). By contrast, Whicher (1998: 290-8) has argued that the *Yogasūtra* can be interpreted as an integration of these different elements, committing to a view of the yogin's being-in-the-world and understanding spiritual emancipation as an embodied state of freedom.

Sarbacker (pp. 105-8, 165-9) notes that most Yoga traditions claim numinous effects of meditation. In Tantrism the progressive system of *samāpatti* is seen as connected to cosmology, and this numinous dimension both describes the process of yogic ascension and the mythical relationships to that cosmology. Sometimes there is a direct correlation between meditative attainments and the status as a divinity. The structure of *samādhi* may also be understood to have *karmic* effects beyond the immediate effects on consciousness and perception. The tension in tantric theory between *siddhi* ("accomplishment") and *bodhi* ("awakening") represents an extension of the numinous and cessative dimensions (p. 190):

> ... the development of *sādhana* [tantric practice] is demonstrative of an ongoing and organic process, one that exists in the tension between the *numinous* qualities of virtuosity and charisma so characteristic of shamanic authority, and the synthetic, socializing qualities characteristic of being integrated into the concerns of a larger society and a scholastic and ethically-based culture. It also demonstrates the ongoing process of change and adaptation that can be said to be characteristic of meditative theory and practice as is found in both the Hindu and Buddhist contexts ... (p. 194).

As Sarbacker (2001: 63-4) himself readily admits, cessation may be understood in various ways, for example as utter lack of awareness, or that awareness has reached its full fruition in the liberated state. In any case, the numinous-cessative distinction provides for

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"transcendence", thus allowing for a greater variety of interpretations within this framework. One problem with Sarbacker's account lies in terminology. The term *numinous* was originally used by Rudolf Otto in quite a different context, and with a different meaning, than Sarbacker's. Also, Ninian Smart (1997) has used the terms "numinous" and "contemplative" in his two-pole theory of mystical experience. I would prefer to substitute Sarbacker's terms with other variants, such as (mundane) attainment and (supramundane) transcendence, or concentrative and dispersive meditation. This would allow for a greater variety of interpretations—depending on the context.

[137] His terms are: "Die Samādhi des Unterdrückungsyoga", "Die Teistische form der Meditation", "Die Samāpatti des Aneignungsyoga" and "Die Meditative Konzentration (saṃyama) des Achtgliedrigen Yoga".

a context in which to understand both the experiential dimensions of meditation and its reality as a foundation for scholasticism and ritual, dimensions of meditation that have often stood at odds with one another in contemporary scholarship. It also has ramifications in how ideas of liberation are understood on both philosophical and social levels, whether it is considered a state of absolute separation from the world or one that is described as an embodied state of liberation within the world. (Sarbacker 2001: 208)

The different soteriological conceptions, thus connected to the issue of mystical experience and meditative structures, have been categorized by Eliade (1990) in terms of a tension between 'absolute freedom' and 'immortality'. These are ideals that have existed all along throughout the history of Yoga but with different purposes: "Yoga was identified not only with the way of sanctity and liberation but also with magic, particularly with the magical means of vanquishing death. In other words, the mythology of the *jīvan-mukta* satisfied not only thirst for freedom but also the longing for immortality" (Eliade 1990: 340).

It is essential to acknowledge both attainment and cessation, as well as varying soteriological conceptions, as part of the incessant dialogues within more modern Yoga traditions. The more or less overlapping tension-fields mentioned above, consisting of scholastic, soteriological, meditative and experiential dynamics, is still very much part of a vibrant debate. Apparently modern traditions of yoga continue to interpret, in various ways, the tensions of immediacy-contextuality, transcendence-immanence, structure-process, theory-practice, and so on. Their interpretations may involve how the different elements are to be understood, or how different tension-fields are played out against or connect to each other.

APPENDIX

Hot Structured	*Hot Unstructured*
The cosmos is vast and inhabited by innumerable powerful beings; liberation consists in finding one's way through the labyrinth with the appropriate passwords.	There is a divine power, quite other than oneself, which encloses us and is the source of liberation.
Cool Structured	*Cool Unstructured*
Liberation is within oneself, but it must be uncovered by disciplined practice.	One's own nature is liberation; everything else is illusion.

Fig. 1
(from Rawlinson 1989: 172)

Hot Structured	*Hot Unstructured*
ONTOLOGY: There are many powers/beings. COSMOLOGY: The world is a vast labyrinth. ANTHROPOLOGY: Man contains all powers; micro-cosm-macrocosm homology. SOTERIOLOGY: The great journey; the initiatic adventure.	ONTOLOGY: Only God is real; he is unknowable. COSMOLOGY: The universe is God's creation/projection/manifestation; it is entirely dependent on him. ANTHROPOLOGY: Man is nothing before God. SOTERIOLOGY: Acceptance of God's will.
Cool Structured	*Cool Unstructured*
ONTOLOGY: Everything has its place; everything comes and goes. COSMOLOGY: The world is a harmonious whole. ANTHROPOLOGY: Man is the centre of the universe. SOTERIOLOGY: Clear awareness; non-entanglement.	ONTOLOGY: Only the Self is real; or: Nothing is real. COSMOLOGY: The world is an illusion. ANTHROPOLOGY: Man is identical with reality SOTERIOLOGY: Know yourself!

Fig. 2
(from Rawlinson 1989: 173)

Hot Structured The teaching is never given all at once, but only when necessary and then only in cryptic form. This is typical of all forms of esotericism.	*Hot Unstructured* There is no teaching — only love and submission. E.g. Meher Baba: 'I come not to teach, but to awaken.' Subud is another example.
Cool Structured The teaching is open and complete but there is no point in reading p. 100 before you read p. 1. Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* are a good example.	*Cool Unstructured* The teaching is constantly given (the same truth over and over again) but no one understands it. Ramana of Arunachala, Taoism and Zen are examples.

Fig. 3
(from Rawlinson 1989: 175)

HOT

Yogi as *sādhaka*; mystic as initiate.	Yogi as *bhakta*; mystic as lover of God.
Yogi as *vivektṛ*; mystic as contemplative.	Yogi as *jñāni*; mystic as sage

COOL

Fig. 4
(from Rawlinson 1989: 180)

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