

**Research Essay: An Exploration into the Survival of Government and the Practice of Yoga**

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Discovering eternal life can occur at a time when least expected. There are countless movies and stories about kings and explorers searching the furthest reaches of the globe to discover ways to live forever and all for nothing; for they have succumbed to the first trick in the book that travel is the sole method of life's discovery. Actually, finding 'eternal life' or the 'secret to life' is synonymous to the common words for 'finding yourself' or to the discovery of the infinite nature of one's being and its relationship with the Universe. Historically, a hero's journey has a fixed number of steps and leads the protagonist through the process of some outwardly expressed journey. However, the first test in the path of self-discovery, which defines almost every person, is the false conception that one must voyage to other places to find it. Remarkably, the secret to eternal life is hidden, in plain sight, within each of us.

My first moment of realization occurred through a sequence of events which began as my mother drove away, leaving my brother and I at the top of our graveled dirt driveway. She steered the family's camouflage colored Jeep Wrangler down the steep driveway until it disappeared from sight. At first, I could hear the sound of the 4-wheel drive in the distance as she hurried away. For a few minutes, engine sounds echoed off the canyon walls as she shifted gears far away from us until there was no discernable sound other than the wind whispering through the pines. She was gone. "How could this teach anyone anything?" I wondered. Then, I began to recollect the events of the weeks leading to this unknown punishment from my parents.

I recalled the toxic way my father had treated my brother, the strange way my mother had been acting, all as I stood atop the driveway. I was frozen. Paralyzed. There was no purpose for motion. My body refused to move while my mind whirled in a frenzy of disbelief. Three years earlier, my older brother, John, spent two weeks on a Boy Scout camping trip with others from

the Mormon church. John explained that he was raped and molested by members of the Mormon Bishopric leaving him with the understanding that he was gay. After years of keeping this event undisclosed, at the age of fifteen, my brother finally shared this dark secret with my father. Dad could not deal with the idea that *his* junior could be gay. After cycles of self-questioning mixed with blame for everyone else on the planet, my dad finally decided he would “man up” my older brother; John was then banished to six rugged acres of mountain side forest land my father owned in Pioneer, California. Much to my misfortune, my father concluded I must remain with my brother, John, to “keep an eye on him” and to make certain he didn’t “do anything crazy” until he achieved the title, “man up”. I was ten.

I stood at the top of our dirt driveway. I waited for hours until the realization occurred to me that Mother wasn’t coming back. For hours I wept and wailed until, lying in a heap on top of the red clayed dirt, I lost consciousness. When I regained mental acuity, I remembered; and then, my blubbering resumed until I blacked out again. This cycle of knowledge and heartbreak continued for what seemed an eternity until my body was physically incapable of crying any longer. Days may have passed, I wasn’t sure, but it didn’t matter. I was abandoned. I was lost. My brother stayed busy establishing a camp at the end of the driveway for us. He dug a hole and placed a tree branch across it. He pitched a tent out of pine needles, started a fire, and completed all the tasks his Boy Scout training had taught him. All this he did as I lay in an unreconcilable pile, a seemingly useless young boy at the top of the driveway.

Although initially abandoned by our mother, once a week visits began to occur. Our mother needed to check the progress of my brother, John; above all else, she wanted confirmation he was no longer compromised sexually. During these weekly visits, she brought cans of Chef Boyardee SpaghettiOs and canned French cut Green Beans. Each time my mother

arrived, she stayed only long enough to unload supplies and ask my brother if he was “done being gay”. When my brother responded that he was not, our banishment continued. Weeks turned into months. Sometimes my mother would forget to come up the mountain to bring supplies and conditions got incredibly desperate. We were forced to catch and kill wildlife to remain alive. Hunting was a struggle for me. My timing was usually off and I rarely caught my prey. I could not, “live in the moment”, as John would say.

In this raw state of survival, I suffered for what seemed like endlessness. Eventually, time itself seemed to play tricks on my mind. I continued to explore the extent of my understanding of reality through what I considered to be the erosion of my ego. My thoughts used words less and less. Sometimes, my brother and I would not see one another for days; thus, my thinking became less dependent on words and more reliant on abstractness. My mind more capably perceived the way nature communicated through the patterns of the forest. In this process of letting go, the truth occurred to me that life, which had previously been lived in a separate but constant state of recalling memory and anticipating the future, should be experienced without the separation of these ideas. I had been living in the woods wishing that I was somewhere other than where I was. The idea occurred to me that living life fixated upon a single event in time causes a stressful friction called suffering; i.e., one cannot live happily in a moment wishing more for the past or hoping more for the future. Therefore, I concluded that in order to find true happiness, one must learn to love the moment and abandon all attachment toward all other moments.

One day, as I sat under a great pine tree, in my particularly arranged pile of pine needles, I listened to the sounds of the forest while I contemplated whether or not I breathe or if breathing is something that is done to me. I pondered what happens when there is no thought in breathing consciously and the body begins the process automatically. I remembered asking myself, “Does

the mind wish to die if it stops thinking about breathing? Does the body disobey by continuing to breath on its own? Am I not in control of my body or is my body in control of me?” Quite suddenly, I achieved a state of awareness that immediately released my hope of being rescued from the mountain. In this state, I was no longer attached to any other event from any other moment and was living completely in that moment. I became completely free from all care, worry, and fear. I became one with the Great Breath. All at once, this complete awareness pulled into focus the truth that I was not a little boy living on the mountain; instead, I was the mountain expressed as a little boy. I was all things and was in no way separate. I found complete serenity. I was eternal.

Twenty-something years later, during my first visit to a yoga studio, as instructed, all the yogi’s in the studio adjusted their bodies into a position – arguably the most uncomfortable hip extension ever dreamt up – when the yoga teacher announced, “You are in position; there is nothing to do now but breathe.” In that instant, my earlier revelation rushed back to me. The yoga instructor repeated what I learned as a little boy and had since forgotten. Like many other lives, my life had busied me with so many distractions that I had forgotten the lesson of my youth. In this small yoga studio, all there was to do was breathe. In fact, yoga worked like a shortcut and helped to take me there without ever leaving here. Yoga transported me away from the game, dissolved all fear, and in a breath, I was back with the mountain. I was the mountain. I was all that was, and I was where I had always been, home.

I have strayed from many simple truths I understood as a child. One truth I buried was the knowledge that two states cannot coexist in the mind; a concept that was made rather prevalent when I worked as a math tutor in my 20’s. Sometimes, students would become so overwhelmed with emotions that they were rendered absolutely incapable of solving math problems. Emotions

became such an issue while tutoring math, I had to set apart what I called “emotion time” to allow the students to decompress. This is not groundbreaking news. The knowledge that we cannot exist in two mental states has been around for a long time. Since the origins of the first government, people claiming to be “leaders” have used the dual state tactic to inflict fear upon their followers. This leadership method establishes an expectation that runs counter to reality. The math students I tutored established an expectation that they should have “gotten it”, when they did not “get it” straight away, they were left in a state of frustration. Their reality did not meet the goals they had set for themselves and when it came time to perform, they could not because they were too occupied with the mental battle of their own disappointment.

Life is about perspective. In yoga it is taught to focus on where we trip, not where we fall because falling is natural; it is the action of tripping that upsets the balance. This mantra describes politicians who want to perpetually focus on where we fall because removing the stumbling block, which causes the trip in the first place, would resolve the conflict all together. A community that has the correct perspective and is healed does not require governance; thus, government is relieved of its function. I contemplate that as yoga heals communities, could it be that government is simultaneously threatened?

The Mahayana Buddhist believe that those who have become enlightened and return into the world are superior kinds of beings because they escaped the cycle of rebirth, or *samsara* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). A person who has left the game and returned is called a Pratyekabuddha, which means a private Buddha, one who knows but willingly returns to the world (Watts, 2019). It is important to understand the meaning of willingness because it denotes that memory is retained after departure and then returns to the world from the Buddha cosmos. The Mahayana Buddhist believe that all beings are reborn endlessly; however, with each rebirth,

memory is missing. On the other hand, private Buddha knows he has returned. Hence, in Hindu traditions, the realization of who one is, called *sadhana*, meaning discipline, becomes the focus of its teachings (Watts, 2019). Yoga, from Sanskrit (“योग”), is observed as a, “discipline aimed at training the consciousness for a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility that is achieved through the three paths of actions and knowledge and devotion” (SHABDKOSH® English Sanskrit Dictionary, n.d.). Yoga is the same as the English word *yoke* and the Latin work *iungere*, to join, or union (Watts, 2019). The word yoga means the inverse of alienation or separateness and is a vehicle to enlightenment. Quite the opposite, governments in the United States (US) insist that civilized people are to feel quite separate and individual (Watts, 2019). This individualism keeps the people from uniting and forming a threat to government which concludes that in order for world governments to survive, laws which regulate the practice of yoga among citizens must be established to maintain control over populations.

The peaceful operation of any group of people may be found in their language; yet language works only when the transacting parties are already familiar with the terms being exchanged. Just as when the word “shark” is vocalized, the meaning by another is visualized; and you do not have to bring an actual shark into the room for the meaning to be clear. In this way, language acts as a shorthand for life, but its limits are realized as soon as one party of the conversation speaks a term that the other cannot relate to. It is at this juncture that the communication is crippled, demonstrating that communication is effective only when both parties understand the meanings of the words employed. Equally important, the more common or relatable the term or phrase, the more marketable the message. This notion keeps many people living their lives within the confines of the simplest language because it provides safety in rendering thoughts. In other words, should one make a discovery that could never be described,

the occurrence would not hold value; it would not matter since its meaning could not be revealed. Interestingly enough, the term *matter* comes from the Sanskrit word “मात्रा”, which translates to “mātr” or “mātrā” (SHABDKOSH® English Sanskrit Dictionary, n.d.), and finds its roots in the Hindu word “māyā”, which also means “magic” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), and ironically enough means “illusion” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In a way, one could postulate that the measurement of matter is a kind of illusion as no one has ever seen inches lying around or has ever been able to pick one up (Watts, 2019). Regardless, value has been cast upon the use of measuring and mankind has convinced itself that if one comprehends the thing, the thing can be controlled. In this way, a sensation of safety is found in the use of language’s applications. Conversely, if one cannot comprehend something, a lack of safety is experienced, urging society to push the incomprehensible out as immaterial; it must not matter. This notion also helps to maintain feelings of safety. Therefore, this ‘*simplest terms*’ approach is usually supported and perpetuates ignorance about many concepts. For example, consider the idea that certain saints have been seen to possess a halo (Fig. 1).



*Figure 1 – Depiction of the halo of Christ (Mercier, 2007, p. 13)*

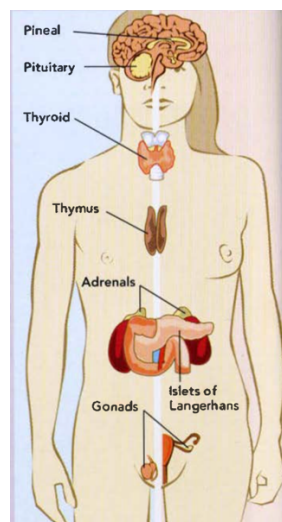


The very idea or mention of a halo (or crown chakra), for most, furnishes such an abstract cognitive relation that the notion triggers a colloquially established reflexive air of disbelief on grounds that the idea is spiritual make-believe, imagination, or lunacy. When the Theosophist Society founder Alice Bailey, along with Leadbeater, first realized that “the traditional position of the chakras (Fig. 2)



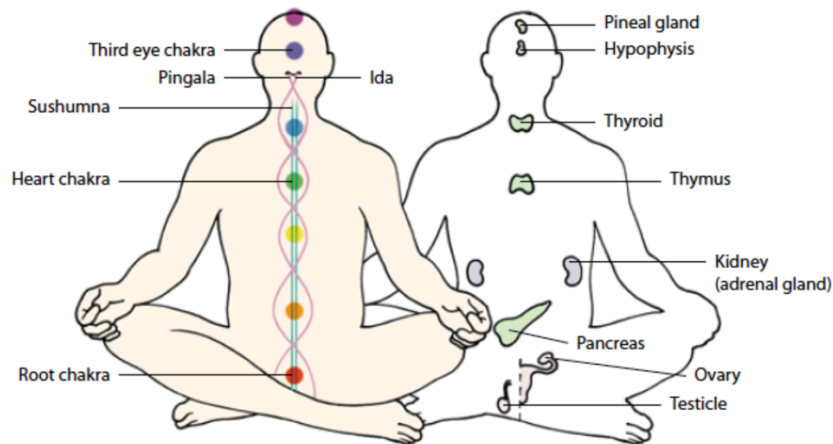
*Figure 2 – Image of chakras of the body (Mercier, 2007, p. 29)*

corresponds to the positions and functions of the glands of the endocrine system and to the positions of the nerve ganglia along the spinal column” (Fig. 3),



*Figure 3 (Illustration of endocrine system, Mercier, 2007, p. 40)*

a new bridge of terms was formed to understand past interpretations of body energy (Mercier, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, it was later discovered that glands operate by completing circuits and generate a “rotating ring” or “wheel” of energy in the body (Fig. 4).



*Figure 4 – Illustration of the chakras “rotating ring” (Breatheology, n.d.)*

In fact, the etymology of the term *cakra* is found in the Sanskrit word (“चक्रम्”) that literally means “wheel” (SHABDKOSH® English Sanskrit Dictionary, n.d.). In addition, according to yoga philosophy, the term *chakra* (from “cakra”) refers to seven points of physical or spiritual energy in the body (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It must be noted however, that the concept of chakras was not taken seriously by Western culture until the relationship to glands could be established. This does not mean that the Eastern concept of chakras was antediluvian cave-talk until Westerners knew about glands. Rather, it was the other way around; ancient Eastern medicine knew about these things long before Western medicine could place such words, as *glands*, upon them to bring them to a place of value.

While attempting to expound upon the nature of the Universe, an explanation once presented itself wherein its author described an experience of drowning as a child. He explained that, as a toddler, he was playing near the side of a public pool while his mother was busy talking

with a friend nearby. As some children do, he came too close to the water's edge and fell in the pool. He claims that while in the water, as he approached the completion of his drowning, the water began to thicken like molasses. Then, the fabric of reality itself began to stiffen and become rigid until seconds took months to pass. Through this process, the indexing of time slowed its pace until he was entirely suspended in an endless scene where he had a space of thought to imagine his mother saving his life. He continued by saying, following his mother saving him, that he lived an entire life and died in his mid-60's only to awake back at the pool where he remains an infinitely drowning toddler. He affirmed that this cycle had repeated itself so many times, he had forgotten how many times he lived this life but that with each new experience, he was able to change elements which vastly affect the outcomes. In essence, he maintained that this reality was nothing more than a manufactured production in the mind of an endlessly drowning toddler, where he lived out every possible eventuality of his character. This narrative illustrates the argument for solipsism, "a theory holding that the self can know nothing but its own modifications and that the self is the only existent thing" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). There is no way to confirm or deny solipsism; for, as in the words of Samuel Butler's 17<sup>th</sup>-century poem *Hudibras*, "He that complies against his will, is of his own opinion still, which he may adhere to, yet disown, for reasons to himself best known" (Cliffsnotes, n.d.). This view most importantly identifies the problem that one cannot converse with others about abstract meanings or experiences since the level of insight differs from person to person. In other words, no common party terms exist with which to frame-in these experiences.

Regardless of the weakness found in language, there are those who have experienced undeniably enlightened states of awareness and have returned to this world to share their experiences. The acceptance of these enlightened one's accounts has been tested throughout

time. In particular, demonstrating the truthfulness and benefit of their spiritual beliefs has been challenging since. This perspective required people to be free to act out the effects of the enlightened, unincumbered by governments rules. Hence, a balance had to be struck, which allowed enlightened states to be recognized, but disapproved, unduly imposed, ineffable experiences upon others who disbelieved such tenets. Shortly after the foundation of the United States, the government set out to establish a framework that allowed mystical activities to persist within a society unfettered by interferences. The founding fathers believed such obstruction would hinder the spiritual growth of its people. On January 16, 1786, Thomas Jefferson, hoping to create a “wall of separation” between the church and the state, authored the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom which declares,

*“... no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced ... in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities”* (Lankford & Moore, n.d.).

However, the language of Jefferson did not definitively state that there is an actual “separation”. In fact, according to the Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, the phrase *separation of church and state* actually came 161 years later when Justice Black ruled on *Everson V. Board of Education* (n.d.). In this 1947 ruling, Black interpreted the law by saying, “In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect ‘a wall of separation between church and State.’ *Reynolds v. United States*, supra, at 98 U. S. 164” (Nolo Law for All, n.d.).

As time marched on, the focus of lawmakers became fixed upon religion, and they set out to define exactly the meaning of religion. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, *religion* means: "a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices" (n.d.). This extremely broad explanation of religion encourages many to submit their machinations of a religion for legal protection with varying results. For example, a Federal Court in the state of Nebraska ruled that the Flying Spaghetti Monster (FSM) was a satirical parody of religion and did not qualify for religious protections under the law. In part, this ruling explained, "The FSM Gospel is plainly a work of satire, meant to entertain while making a pointed political statement. To read it as religious doctrine would be little different from grounding a 'religious exercise' on any other work of fiction" (Arstechnica, 2016). The argument presented by Pastafarians is a fascinating one because it purports opposition to government discrimination against people who do not follow a recognized religion (like yogis), for which there are no legal safe havens. Currently, The Supreme Court has interpreted religion to mean, "a sincere and meaningful belief that occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to the place held by God in the lives of other persons. The religion or religious concept need not include belief in the existence of God or a supreme being to be within the scope of the First Amendment" (Farlex, Inc., n.d.). Furthermore, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) dictates that in order to be considered a religious organization, said establishment must include an acceptable combination of the following:

- Distinct legal existence
- Recognized creed and form of worship
- Definite and distinct ecclesiastical government
- Formal code of doctrine and discipline

- Distinct religious history
- Membership not associated with any other church or denomination
- Organization of ordained ministers
- Ordained ministers selected after completing prescribed courses of study
- Literature of its own
- Established places of worship
- Regular congregations
- Regular religious services
- Sunday schools for the religious instruction of the young
- Schools for the preparation of its members (1828)

The IRS also requires that qualification for exemption under section 501(c)(3), is based upon an organization being organized and operated exclusively for one or more exempt purposes.

Additionally, the qualifying organization must be organized as a corporation, a limited liability company (LLC), an unincorporated association, or a trust (n.d.). All of these stipulations leave the lagom of yoga in an interesting legal place. Yoga is not necessarily something that can be incorporated or made into an LLC.

Should the argument ever be taken to the US government to classify yoga as a religion it may be more successful than the FSM document. To begin, according to Gary Kraftsow, the founder and director of the American Viniyoga Institute in Oakland, California, the origins of yoga are Vedic (Ferretti, 2017). *Vedic* means of or relating to the Vedas, “the language in which they are written, or Hindu history and culture between 1500 b.c. and 500 b.c.” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This means, yoga has a **distinct religious history** as it predates the formulation of what modern Hindus think of as their religion (Ferretti, 2017). Yoga also has **literature of its**

**own** called the Yoga Sutra, an authoritative text on yoga which, “has a collection of aphorisms outlining the eight limbs of yoga” (Ferretti, 2017), and could be argued is the yogis Bible or holy scriptures. These elements, combined with the fact that **regular congregations** of millions of yogis practice at **established places of worship** each day in the US, demonstrates many criteria that the IRS defines as a church. Initially, from a blurry American viewpoint, yoga begins to focus as a potential religion. However, the argument loses traction according to David Frawley, founder and director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He articulates that yoga is different than a religion because it has a tradition of *dharma*, which he explains is a difficult term to translate, often mistranslated as the law, when *doctrine* or *method* would be more suitable (Watts, 2019). Nevertheless, Frawley continued, “Some call dharma... the law of the consciousness universe,” and “religion in the Western sense, as a belief system, is often different from a dharma tradition” (Ferretti, 2017). Therefore, the pluralistic traditions of yoga do not provide a single approach for everyone and it is in this broadness that the entirety of yoga cannot fit into the narrow gates of the American legal definition of church.

Thus, yoga is not a belief system like Christianity, which holds that there is one singular perspective that its believers must adopt. Instead, yoga emphasizes universal ethics such as *ahimsa* (nonviolence), the theory of *karma* (the force generated by one’s actions (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), rebirth, and a culture of meditation (Ferretti, 2017). Additionally, similar to Buddhism, yoga teaches that spiritual ignorance binds us to samsara (Yoga Basics, n.d.) and through living a life of personal contemplation brings us to a personal sense of peace and satisfaction regarding life’s deeper meanings (YogaClicks, n.d.). The importance of how we revere thought is crucial to enlightenment and requires exploration to better understand the role it plays in our interpretation of reality.

At some point in the history of mankind, around three to four thousand years ago, the realization occurred that directed thought could be used to manipulate the environment. The use of directed thought was called self-consciousness (Watts, 2019). In Chinese this concept is written using the character for thought (念) three times, to say, “niàn, niàn, niàn”, which directly translates as “thought, thought, thought.” The use of *thought* three times represents how one thought follows the other in a succession, just as a stream can flow, flow, and flow. In English this is called *stream of consciousness* (Watts, 2019). Using Freud’s oceanic model of the Universe, this stream of consciousness comes and goes, ebbs and flows, as do the waves of the ocean (Saarinen, 2015). Through the use of this stream of consciousness, mankind has developed all manner of devices to enact its will upon the world. One of the most incredible tools used to enact this will is language. However, language can both save and enslave as it builds boxes in the mind, then, forces the mind to live in them. This dichotomy occurs through the use of a *definiendum*, the Latin root for *define*, which is derived from Latin “dēfiniens,” meaning “to mark the limits of” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). When language builds boxes in the mind, though, as soon as the limits are marked, something is left out. It is in this process of leaving out that mankind narrows the gates of understanding and limits possibilities. Governments rely upon the operation of things being defined first, then – and only then – can things be authorized to exist and serve the desires of said government. On the other hand, yoga teaches that one does not need to define all things and should yield to the field of forces that one finds in order to let go (Watts, 2019). By all rights, this thinking should be considered dangerous to government because yoga breaks down barriers while government strives to build more.

One of the earliest written records in existence is considered a holy collection of books referred to as the Bible. Interestingly enough, chapter one of the Book of Genesis, in the King



James Version of the Bible, starts by saying, “In the beginning...” (King James Bible Online, n.d.). When read with proper diction, perhaps in the voice of Hal Douglas, the famous “In a World” voice actor for motion picture trailers (IMDb, n.d.), this introduction can sound titillating like a new installment of Lord of The Rings. Regardless, the reality is that the language, “In the beginning...,” is intrinsically damaging to the human psyche for several reasons. To begin, notice how this passage starts with the word *in*, which mutually implies that there is an *out*. To say that there was a beginning invokes the separation of events into partitions of time which are more mentally manageable but neglect to highlight the cognitive prestidigitation that takes place. This sleight of hand is found in the author’s attempt to establish a starting point while entirely refusing to address what came before *the beginning*, leaving gaping holes in the holy plot. This then becomes a logic trap, much like how no one can truly say where the Universe exists because this would require an outside reference point. However, should an outside reference point be found, the new point would also become part of the known Universe. Thus, one is left at the beginning in the same conundrum; no one can truly say where the Universe exists. With this relatively new self-consciousness, existing in a plane where mankind cannot say where he is or how he got here, humans are left scrambling to find answers because otherwise, the feelings of solitude and loneliness are overwhelming.

Upon the advent of science, a new cycle of explanations began to emerge which attempted to expound the true nature of all things. According to Alan Watts, in his lecture titled “1.1.11. – Limits of Language – Pt. 1”, Watts explained that through the processes of science mankind has fallen under the enchantment of the grammatical illusion that, “a verb, or action, or event must be set into motion by a noun” (2019). This leaves us asking ridiculous questions such as, “Who knows?” “Who does it?” “What does it?”. Watts continues;

*“When the ‘what’ that is supposed to do it is the same as ‘the doing,’ you could very easily see that the whole process of the universe may be understood as ‘process.’ Nobody is doing it. Because when you go back to doing it, you go back to the military analogy, the chain of command, the boss who goes bang! and the object obeys. That’s a very crude idea, very unsophisticated.”*

This lack of sophistication lies in the language of science which includes verbs and nouns which train the mind to always move in terms of agents and operations. Cultures which do not use nouns in their language (such as the Nootka Indians) consider the existence of the idea that there is a creator of the Universe, or God, a strange concept. Therefore, through our very language we fall victim to our own logic that the Universe cannot exist unless it has an agent (Watts, 2019). The constraint of language upon science results in science itself being another sort of logic puzzle, only containing half-truths, leaving us no better off in understanding the Universe than we did with religion. This makes the whole work of science a slave to methodology that produces more questions than answers. The Chinese characters 公案 are pronounced as *gōng'àn*, which translates to *kōan* (Ninchanese, n.d.), a term that describes the conversations old masters would have with students to relay the wisdom of the ancients (Watts, 2019). The purpose of the *kōan* was to create an unsolvable riddle which would logically trap the student into an infinite cycle of reasoning from which there is no escape. An example of a famous *kōan* is the question, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” (Liddell, 2013). Other examples of a *kōan* could be the Freemasonry, religion, or even science, as none can offer substantive evidences of what actually is. In essence, circularly referencing material leaves the mind ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Following the discovery that Earth was not the center of the Universe and was a rather uncommon planet in a swirling mess of space debris, mankind was left with a deflated sense of self. This culminated into a culture which led Western countries, such as the United States, to establish democracy on the wrong foot through condescendingly professing that “all men are created equal” (National Archives, n.d.). In his lecture, titled “ 3.8.15 The World as Self Part 3”, Watts dug deeper into the fallacy of Western democracy when he explained;

*“..[I]n the...Christian scriptures it says everybody is equal in the sight of God. Now, that’s a mystical utterance. That means that from the standpoint of God all are divine [a]nd are playing to function. ...[T]hat is something that is true on a certain plane of consciousness. [However,] to come down a step and try to apply the mystical insight in the practical affairs of everyday life and what do you get[?] [Y]ou get a parody of mysticism. You get the idea, not that everybody is equal in the sight of God but that all people are equally inferior. And that’s why all bureaucracies are rude, why the police are rude, and why you are made to wait in lines ...because everybody is a crook, everybody is equally inferior, so that becomes the parity of democracy. [T]hat kind of society watch out for it[,] it turns in a quick click into facets. ...because of its terror of the outsider” (Watts, 2019).*

With this attitude toward its citizens, governments hypocritically profess that all are equal while really intending to say that they are all equally worthless. Nevertheless, in yoga teaching there is no separation of beings and we are all as one breath. According to Tai Dorn of Tai Yoga, “Your breath, in Sanskrit is known as *prana*. Prana is also a word for life or life force” (Dorn, 2016). Dorn also explains that when you attend a yoga class, one’s life cycle is

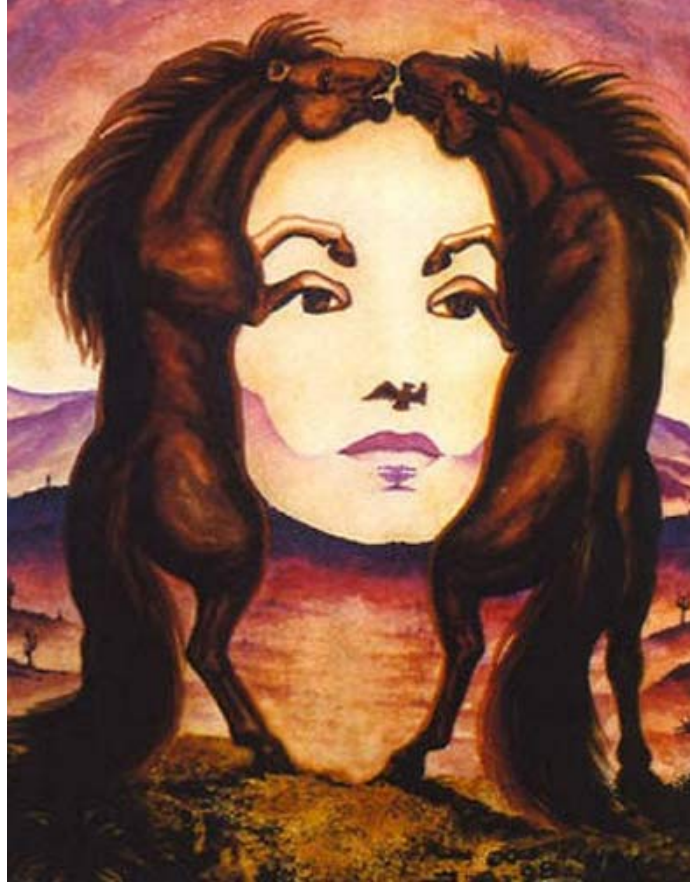
represented. The class begins in child's pose and ends in *savasana* (corpse pose) and, "...[t]he beginning of your life starts with an inhale and the end of your life finishes on an exhale" (2016). When done properly, this practice of traversing birth and death helps yogis to arrive at peace with the life cycle and through understanding the natural aspects of birth and death they come to know the truth of all things. Dorn explains, this is because, "In death we are truly offered a way to live" (2016). So, while governments expend a great deal of energy putting their believers down and trying to stir the fear of death, yoga teaches its believers that we are all one and the same. Yoga restores confidence, uplifts the spirit, and heals the body. Yoga teaches that each of us is the entire Universe manifested in their given form.

Citizens must remain perpetually afraid in order for governments to maintain control over their populations (Saperstein & Abkin, 2017). Therefore, this tactic is used continually in abusive relationships. Abuse works when the abusing party convinces the victim that he/she is worthless and cannot make it in life without them. This tactic only works when the victim pledges allegiance to the abuser and truly believes that nothing can be better. This atrocious relationship traps the victim into a game of abuse and enables the abuser to continue the bad behavior. For instance, whenever events crescendo, the abuser can simply issue threats of violence (or carry out actual violence) to trigger the victim's fears, thus, restoring equilibrium to the abusive relationship, in the favor of the abuser. In short, a government that does not have a population fearful of death, does not have a population.

It is increasingly more difficult to simply snuff out a growing belief among citizens. In the United States, laws are written in precarious ways which have allowed yoga to remain virtually untouched by government, giving yoga the ability to flourish. In addition, it should be noted that governments are unfamiliar with the practice of yoga, therefore, regulations may

dilute the core teachings of yoga which would be dangerous territory (Golden, 2009). According to the Yoga Alliance, “There are two major regulatory issues facing the yoga community: government licensing regulations and post-secondary education and vocational training regulations” (2016). These regulations have progressed in part from popular teachers who became as “infallible spiritual leaders” resulting in cases of abuse such as rape and sexual assault (Poff, 2016). Current yoga studios in the United States are staffed with teachers who only possess completion of a 200-hour class (Poff, 2016). Therefore, in the US, the current regulation is primarily focused on the financial security of the yoga studio rather than quality of teaching. This approach has caused many yoga studios to retreat into large-scale gyms or to maintain a gym atmosphere altogether. Thus, it could be argued that the US government, by taking a more hands-off approach to yoga, has allowed the rampant spirit of capitalism to dilute the essence of what yoga is, thereby neutralizing the threat. Through what yoga has become in the US, many are left asking, “Are most yoga classes in the US really just stretching & balance classes?” (Quora, n.d.)”.

The power that lies in yoga occurs when a person, using yoga properly, reaches enlightenment. However, not everyone reaches enlightenment when they practice yoga because they see only what they want without reaching oneness with the universe. This makes yoga more of an art form, like singing, painting, etc. The obfuscated nature of yoga leaves it to be thought of in many different ways. Some consider yoga as nothing more than stretching and balancing, while others use yoga as a vehicle of conscious transport to connect directly with The Source. In this way, the secrets to the Universe are disguised, in plain sight, just as artwork may be interpreted differently (Fig. 5).



*Figure 5 (A painting of two horses)*

Even when yoga is taught by a master, the cryptic elements to yoga veil the secret of it. As a result, the practice of yoga has not resulted in a mass enlightenment and an overturning of government. Instead, yoga has become a superficial athletic pastime that is of no concern whatsoever to those in positions of authority. Also, the current practice of yoga in the United States does not appear to require any more regulation from the government than what is already in place. Furthermore, yoga does not qualify as a religion although yoga has been around longer than any religion and has never posed a threat to government. Without a doubt, world governments will survive even if the practice of yoga among its citizens goes unregulated because Western qualities that define religion are lacking. Therefore, there is no doubt that

if/when yoga is practiced, as it is intended, governments will be forced to rise up in opposition in order to protect its complete authority.

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