
YOGA AND HAKOMI: TWO FRIENDS MEET

DYRIAN BENZ

DYRIAN BENZ, PSY.D. IS A CERTIFIED HAKOMI THERAPIST AND TRAINER AND THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE HAKOMI INSTITUTE. HE HAS HAD A LONG STANDING INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN YOGA AND CAN BE CONTACTED THROUGH THE INSTITUTE OFFICE IN BOULDER, SINCE HIS PRACTICE IS CURRENTLY SHUTTLING HIM BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE.

The whole point of Yoga is to achieve a still, clear mind. That's what all the fuss is about. Sounds like a straightforward and perhaps even simple goal. Yet, we all know how extremely difficult it is to even come close. Since this goal is so paradoxically difficult, Yoga has developed a practical approach to achieve this state of mind.

In its entirety, Yoga usually includes a variety of practices which focus on the physical, nutritional, mental-emotional, spiritual and ethical areas of life. However, the basic aim of all the practices, which is easily forgotten by the diversity of the practices, is to achieve a clear and unconditioned mind. It is in this area that the Hakomi Method of Psychotherapy and Yoga meet. An additional meeting ground for Yoga and Hakomi is their foundation on an introspective, gentle attitude, and a respect for the integrity and intelligence of life.

Of particular interest to anyone studying the complexities of the body-mind-spirit is a basic and essential Yoga text, upon which almost all Yoga practices are built, the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali. The word "Sutra" means "thread", signifying that these Sutras carry only the most essential thread of meaning upon which then, traditionally, the teacher would expand.

These practical instructions for achieving optimal functioning were passed on ver-

bally from teacher to student in ancient times, but they are now available in print in many versions. The Sutras are estimated to be anywhere from 2,000 to 7,000 years old, which means a considerable amount of practice and refinement have gone into them. We could say from a modern, scientific point of view, that a considerable amount of practical research had been conducted with them over thousands of years by an uncountable number of practitioners.

The rest of this article presents a few key selections from the Yoga Sutras which are particularly relevant to the practice of Hakomi Therapy. I will assume that the reader is sufficiently familiar with Hakomi to draw the parallels between the two disciplines.

All the selections from the following sutras have been re-transliterated by me with language geared especially toward individuals with some psychological background or curiosity. I have taken considerable care to make the selections clear and understandable while at the same time not sacrificing their deep meaning -- within the realm of my own understanding and experience with them. In order to facilitate a deeper study of this material by the interested reader, the traditional placement of the sutras is noted in the text.

With this much introduction, I will now let the sutras speak for themselves, with only some connective comments between them.

The first sutra states the purpose of Yoga.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN ACCOUNT OF HOW A MOST ADVANCED AND PROFOUND LEVEL OF HUMAN FUNCTIONING CAN BE ACHIEVED. (Book 1, 1)

How this is to be achieved is described by the next sutra which is said to be the crown jewel, or essence, of all the sutras.

BY STILLING ALL MENTAL ACTIVITY THE SUM TOTAL OF HUMAN POTENTIAL IS ABLE TO SPONTANEOUSLY EMERGE AND EXPRESS ITSELF. (Book 1, 2)

The result of a still mind expresses itself thus:

THEN ALL INNER FRAGMENTATION, CONFLICT AND DISTURBANCE GIVES WAY TO THE NATURAL AND PRIMARY STATE OF INSPIRED AND PROFOUND HARMONY, AND THE PERSON ABIDES IN THE INNERMOST, NATURAL STATE. (Book 1, 3)

What about our other functioning in life?

AT OTHER TIMES WE FALSELY IDENTIFY OUR INNERMOST STATE (OR SELF) TO BE THE SAME AS WHATEVER MENTAL ACTIVITY IS HAPPENING. THEN THE ESSENCE SEEMS TO DISAPPEAR BECAUSE OUR IDENTIFICATION IS WITH THE PRESENT MENTAL ACTIVITY AND EXPERIENCE. (Book 1, 4)

BECAUSE OF OUR LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE THE MIND OVEREMPHASIZES THE WORLD OF EXPERIENCE AS REALITY, WHICH ACTUALLY ONLY CLOUDS THE LIVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE ESSENTIAL SELF WITHIN. THE SELF IS SIMPLY THE ONE THAT SEES WITHOUT ANY QUALIFICATIONS OR JUDGMENTS. HOWEVER, SINCE WE GENERALLY FUNCTION EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH THE CONDITIONED CONCEPTS OF THE MIND, ALL PERCEPTIONS ARE CONSISTENTLY COLORED BY THE MIND. (Book 2, 20)

Then the approach of Yoga is described thus:

THE ENTIRE CREATION (ALL OF LIFE, ALL THAT IS) EXISTS ONLY TO PROVIDE US WITH EXPERIENCE. EVENTUALLY, THOUGH THE SELF APPEARS TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS

EXPERIENCE, IT IS ACTUALLY ONLY AN INACTIVE WITNESS TO IT ALL. (Book 2, 21)

WHEN YOU REST IN YOUR REAL NATURE, THEN ALL THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WORLD, OF YOUR LIFE, LOSE THEIR REACTIVE POWER OVER YOU. THEN YOU SEE REALITY IN A NEW LIGHT, EVEN THOUGH OTHER PEOPLE WILL PROBABLY NOT NOTICE THIS CHANGE NOT WILL THEY BE ABLE TO CONFIRM YOUR NEW PERCEPTION. (Book 2, 22)

THIS EXPERIENCE OF UNION IS ACTUALLY AN "ACT OF REMEMBERING" OF THE REAL AND ORIGINAL CONDITION. WE ONLY MISTAKENLY ASSUME THAT THERE IS A SEPARATION TO BEGIN WITH. (Book 2, 24)

WITHOUT THIS MISTAKEN ASSUMPTION NO SUCH UNION IS EVEN AN ISSUE, FOR THEN THE SELF SIMPLY RESTS IN ITS OWN NATURE. (Book 2, 25)

Then finally, here is the recommended method to apply:

UNINTERRUPTED, DISCRIMINATIVE SELF-OBSERVATION IS THE METHOD TO REMOVE ANY FALSE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE REALITY OF YOUR BEING. (Book 2, 26)

"As long as we entertain the idea that we can overcome nature, we are sure to see our 'health care' schemes backfire or disappoint."

***Dr. Virgil Strang
Dean of Philosophy
Palmer College of Chiropractic
The Essential Principles of Chiropractic***

"[The natural] laws are not forces external to things, but represent the harmony of movement immanent to them."

I Ching

"The [body] is operated by an intelligent vital force which I saw fit to name Innate – born with."

***D.D. Palmer, Founder of Chiropractic
The Science, Art & Philosophy of Chiropractic***