



Search



[SITE MAP](#)

A recent version of Adobe Flash Player is needed to view many of the videos on this site.  
To download this video, [right-click here](#).

## The Book of Yo

Version 0.2

[Consensed on January 4, 2004]

## The Way of Yo

- [The Open Source Truth Process](#)
- [What is Yo?](#)
- [Proof of the Existence of Yo](#)
- [10 Sacred Principles](#)
- [The Word According to Yo](#)
- [The 5 Pillars](#)
- [The Main Beliefs](#)
- [Yoism, According to The Boston Globe](#)
- [Yoism, According to The LA Times](#)
- [According to the Wikipedia](#)
- [According to Search Magazine](#)
- [Quotations from Famous Yoans](#)
- [Heaven on Earth According to South Park](#)
- [Inspirational Texts](#)
- [The Book of Yo](#)

## Projects & Service

- [Climate Change Artists](#)
- [Zuzu's Place](#)
- [Eco-village](#)

## Getting Involved

- [Gatherings](#)
- [Donate to Yoism](#)
- [Online Collaboration](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## **The Book of Yo**

### Collaborative Writing Project

If Yoism Rings True to You,  
Please Take Action!



## **Table of Contents**

<a href="#">The Book of Yo</a>	3
<a href="#">Introduction</a>	4
<a href="#">Chapter 1: Welcome To Yoism</a>	5
<a href="#">Who are We?</a>	5
<a href="#">The Main Beliefs of Yoism</a>	5
<a href="#">Ten Sacred Truths, Principles, and Goals of Yoism</a>	6
<a href="#">The Open Source Truth Process</a>	7
<a href="#">What Makes Yoism Unique?</a>	7
<a href="#">Chapter 2: Empiricism -- Going Beyond (and Toward) the "One True Religion"</a>	9
<a href="#">Truth</a>	9
<a href="#">A Thought Experiment</a>	10
<a href="#">Models</a>	12
<a href="#">Determining Our Beliefs</a>	13
<a href="#">Good Evidence</a>	14
<a href="#">The Importance of Occam's Razor</a>	15
<a href="#">The Afterlife</a>	16
<a href="#">Open-mindedness</a>	18
<a href="#">Chapter 3: Community-- The Open Source Truth Process</a>	18
<a href="#">Open Source Software</a>	19
<a href="#">Open Source Truth</a>	20
<a href="#">Consensual Truth Making: Embracing Conflict</a>	20
<a href="#">Open Source Truth In Action: Revising The Book of Yo</a>	21
<a href="#">Book Yoans</a>	22
<a href="#">Becoming a Book Yoan</a>	22
<a href="#">Proclaiming the Truth Together: Overcoming the Fear of Religion</a>	23
<a href="#">Chapter 4: Meaning</a>	26
<a href="#">Who and what am I?</a>	26
<a href="#">What do you mean by "Meaning"?</a>	27
<a href="#">The Exploration</a>	28
<a href="#">Deep Importance</a>	30
<a href="#">Gatherings</a>	31
<a href="#">Community Agreements About What Is Important</a>	32
<a href="#">The Process For Coming To These Articulations</a>	34
<a href="#">Chapter 5: Reclaiming GOD</a>	36
<a href="#">A Story of Creation</a>	36
<a href="#">Traditional Religion</a>	37
<a href="#">Enlightenment</a>	38
<a href="#">The Nature of God</a>	40
<a href="#">Reclaiming Your Godliness</a>	43
<a href="#">Chapter 6: Why Me? Why Yoism?</a>	46
<a href="#">A Declaration of Inter-Dependence</a>	46



**Help Us Create  
a Sane World!**



**User login**

## **The Book of Yo**

The Book of Yo is, fundamentally, a work in progress.

It aims to articulate the Yoan community's collective understanding about the world, as a common foundation for our actions.

Nevertheless, the Book of Yo is always and forever under revision, as successive versions are produced through the Open Source Truth Process.

Everyone in the Yoan community is invited to participate in this process, to provide input and to suggest improvements, based on one's own direct experience of the world.

Through this process, our central text will never become dogmatic or static, but will instead always be a fluid, living document, able to respond to new experiences and insights into the nature of reality.

Username:

Password:

[Create new account](#)

[Request new password](#)

**Be among the First to Wear a**



**Genuine, Sacred Yoism T-Shirt!**

**Join Yoism**



## Introduction

It is time to stop looking for the teacher, the guru, and to openly and honestly recognize that we are all teachers, we are all god, we all contain valuable life experience and profound lessons on the nature of Truth or Reality. Together we must assume collective leadership of our community. We must empower and nurture and support the struggle in each and every one of us to escape bondage.

This is the fundamental faith of Yoism: truth resides in our experience of reality. Personal verification is the foundation of all belief.

We start by listening to ourselves, trusting our experiences. Our feelings guide the way. Our true purpose is defined by our very existence. Our meaning comes from within.

Some of us are bound by slavery, economic oppression, and laws designed to rob us of our humanity. We must never forget those who struggle in the worst conditions of adversity.

All of us, however, are stuck by the sheer weight of living in a system that is bent on its own destruction.

We want to love, we want to be freed to pursue our dreams. This is most obvious in the ways we try to protect the innocence of children, the way we want them to believe they can become anything they dream of -- but at the same time we have forgotten to protect this in ourselves.

The idea is not to keep dreaming, but to wake up! We must awaken inside our dreams and realize NOW is the moment to act.

We are the one's responsible for our futures, and it is only when we have the strength to risk our own greatness that hope is born into the world.

All of us need help in our own liberation.

Some of us have always dreamed of being artists or entrepreneurs, but feel trapped by the burden of college debt in jobs that rob our souls -- as investment bankers, lawyers, and careful professionals of all types. Some of us have dreamed of starting our own businesses, businesses with a social purpose, and we need to be given the resources and support to take the risks to make these businesses come alive. Some of us have skills that most can only dream of -- we are great musicians, but we are crushed by our own self-doubt, by our lack of support, and we learn to stop trying, to stop dreaming of our own greatness.

Imagine a liberated world, a world in which children are shown how to discover themselves, not according to some stereotype or according to the profit needs of a capitalistic machine, but how to engage the soul quest, how to brave the struggles and suffer the pains of true adventure. Imagine a world that encourages real solutions to hard problems.

We are responsible for each other. Together, we can improve our lives and our world-- if we can learn to love and care for each other, if we can learn to rest and rely on each other, if we can unlearn the myth of independence, which divides us and keeps us weak, for the reality of interdependence, which is the way of the universe.



## Chapter 1: Welcome To Yoism

### Who are We?

We are a community of individuals brought together by our shared understanding of our present situation, and a common vision for our future.

We believe that our institutions—including our governments, our religious organizations, our schools, and our corporations—are failing to meet our most vital needs. Our existing cultural beliefs and values are leading us far astray.

In this we know that we are not alone -- many people wrestle with the sense that something is terribly wrong. There are many groups around the globe engaged in the struggle to find solutions. As Yoans, we recognize that these scattered efforts must be brought together and organized if they are to be effective.

*Together*—as we join one another to form a more unified, larger community that acts on shared, healthy [beliefs](#) and [values](#)—we can create a better world. We are united in our goals: healthy communities, ecological living, and worldwide justice. In short, a sustainable humanity.

Yoans recognize that to form a truly healthy community that is effective as a *group*, we must remain responsive to the experiences of *individuals*. This is an extremely difficult and challenging task, as organizing people into an effective group without asking them to replace their own beliefs and values with those of the group itself is a tricky business.

Yoism, the world's first [Open Source Religion](#), takes up this challenge.

### The Main Beliefs of Yoism

The following beliefs are the foundations of Yoan thought and practice. When we take a careful look at human history, we see that those societies whose core beliefs don't include these ideas and values are unstable, ill, or suffering. To heal ourselves and our world we turn to these principles; the stronger our commitment to them, the stronger we are. A Yoan is someone who embraces these beliefs and ideals and lives by them.

- I. **Empiricism** - Personal verification, by the members of the community, is the only valid foundation for belief. When truth is dictated by dogmatic authority, we are endangered, and there are painful consequences.
- II. **Community** - Humans are profoundly social creatures who require a vital web of relatedness for psychological/emotional well being, just as the human body requires oxygen for physical well being. Because of this, Yoans work toward the creation of healthy communities that can be the foundation for emotional well being and spiritual fulfillment.
- III. **God** - God exists; but the God that exists is not what most people think of when they hear the word. The standard, local, divisive illusions structured around the word-concept "God" have proven to be dangerous and destructive. In contrast to religious communities built on truths received from special, long-dead, divine authorities, Yoism is based on a theology that is consistent with the world as it is experienced today by people everywhere.
- IV. **Democracy** - Yoans agree with the underlying message in Winston Churchill's statement:
 

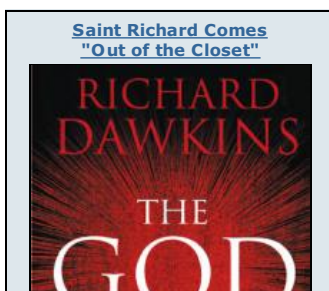
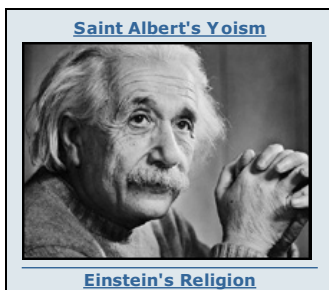
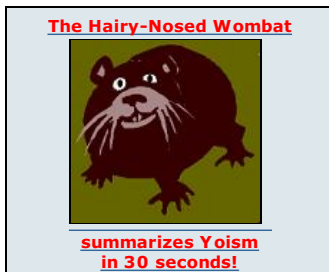
Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world . . . No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government, except all those others that have been tried from time to time.

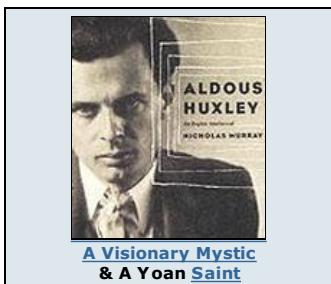
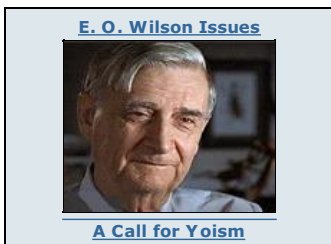
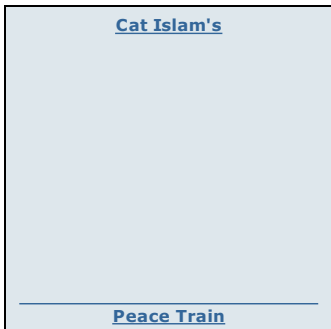
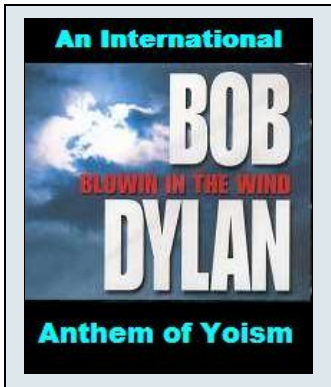
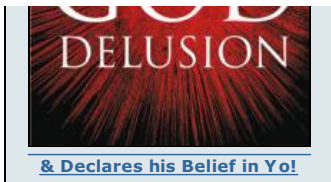
Yoans believe that in the context of communities composed of people who are not blinded by dogmatic, authoritarian thinking, democracy can come closer to producing vital, healthy, sustainable societies. Until a more effective *and* just model for organizing human affairs is demonstrated, Yoans participate in the attempt to develop democracy's untapped potential.
- V. **Environmentalism** - As traveling companions, we are all *keepers* of Spaceship Earth. This hardly needs stating; only the truly insane, the infantile, imbecilic, and/or the pathologically self-destructive pollute and destroy their own home.
- VI. **Growth** - Because humanity is now confronted by terribly difficult conditions, we must all work to continually introduce others to these values and beliefs by engaging their minds and by building welcoming communities that truly transform our relationships and inspire others to do the same.

### Ten Sacred Truths, Principles, and Goals of Yoism

Following from our beliefs, we hold these truths to be self evident,

- I. That all humans are sacred beings that come into the world with equal unalienable Rights.
- II. That among these Rights are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.
- III. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among people, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That these rights may be constrained when, and only when, their constraint is necessary for the maintenance and operation of an effective government that can secure these Rights.
- IV. That these Rights may not be constrained because of religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, race, discomfort with the ideas espoused or actions taken by others, or any other reason that may be put forth to justify constraint other than constraint that is absolutely necessary for the operation of an effective government that can secure these Rights.
- V. That adequate food, shelter, clothing, health care, and other essentials are necessary for





basic rights to be realized; all who are willing (whether able or not) to engage in a fair share of productive work have a right to these essentials.

- VI. That it is our sacred duty to protect the life sustaining biosphere and the diversity of living creatures.
- VII. That all children must be given the chance to grow, thrive, be loved, and to explore their potential to the fullest. That all people -- whether children or adults -- who have not had sufficient opportunities must also be given the chance to thrive and grow, to the fullest extent that the community can provide.
- VIII. That, as profoundly social creatures, we can only achieve our potential when we have the option of participating in healthy, supportive, loving relationships and communities. That participating in the creation of such healthy communities is the sacred duty of all Yoans.
- IX. It is our duty to help others come to understand these Sacred Truths and to enable Yoism to grow into an effective force for healing our world. It is our duty to continually recognize the danger of defining ingroups (Us) and outgroups (Them), for such definitions have been used to justify and encourage terribly evil actions against others.
- X. In pursuit of these goals, Yoans are not guided by dogmatically proclaimed, fixed truths. All Yoans turn to the court of their personal, direct experience of the world and then join together in our collective attempt to formulate the current (best we can do at the moment, unfixed, and open to further revision by the community) Open Source Truths (OST's) that guide us in our pursuit of these Sacred Goals.

All Yoans hold these Ten Sacred Truths. Anyone who embraces these Ten Sacred Truths of Yoism is a welcome member of our community.

### The Open Source Truth Process

Yoism's core doctrines and beliefs, including this Book, are created and refined through the *Open Source Truth Process*. This process is an emerging social technology currently being developed by Yoans working at The Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

The project aims to create a new way for a group to explore and articulate the nature of reality and a common vision for our world. Placing the development of the Truth Process---a new technology for deriving our collective "meaning," values, and beliefs---at the heart of a community of action is a necessary and unique safeguard against the dogmatic pitfalls that typically plague communities built on shared beliefs.

The Truth Process ensures that the Yoan Community is a Living Community whose core writings will evolve over time, through continuous reflection, growth, and evolution in our thinking. Everyone in the community is invited to provide input and improvements, based on each person's own direct experience of reality. Through this process participants will gradually uncover, refine, and document the Truth.

By "Truth" we simply mean the clearest expression of a system of ideas and beliefs that is most consistent with reality as it is directly experienced. Ours is a truth that you can test and experience directly, with your own senses and mind. Our truth is not based on narrow human authority (dogma, received wisdom, and imposed truths). Rather, it is based on the broad authority of the collective human experience of being-in-the-world, i.e., the human experience of reality.

For Yoans, some of the most profoundly meaningful experiences are found in our involvement in the human community, our engagement with one another, our struggle to find ways to act cooperatively without denying our conflicts, and our commitment to the emerging Yoan vision for ourselves, our families, our species, and our planet. Thus the Yoan Truth Process---a process thoroughly embedded in deep human engagement designed to produce our most accurate view of ourselves and our world---is a religious experience.

### What Makes Yoism Unique?

Like all communities formed around common values and beliefs, the Yoan Community faces the danger of becoming dogmatic and exclusive, to the detriment of the very values we strive to embody.

We believe the following central tenets are essential in helping us to avoid this pitfall:

1. We reject claims of truth based solely on authority.
2. We trust our senses, our direct experience of the world, as the ultimate arbiter of reality.
3. We acknowledge fallibility and the eternal evolution of our understanding of reality. **Our truth is a process.**
4. We enshrine human divinity in our system of values. This includes all human beings, even those who disagree with us.
5. We never forget the danger inherent in any group that revolves around shared beliefs.
6. We place the **Open Source Truth Process** at the center of our community, guiding our purpose and our actions in the world.



## Chapter 2: Empiricism -- Going Beyond (and Toward) the "One True Religion"

There is a story about a man who gave up everything to search for the "meaning of life."

Finally, he found a guru with a twinkle in his eye, whose every movement demonstrated his enlightened state. The man served this guru for many, many years, until the day when his guru was on his deathbed. On this day, the man panicked as he realized he had never fully discovered the meaning of life and his guru was about to die. He begged his guru to tell him clearly before he could no longer. His guru struggled to speak and with one of his last breaths, he said, "Life, my son, is a beanstalk."

The man responded with incredulous outrage. With intensified panic he yelled at his guru, "What! After all these years, you tell me 'life is a beanstalk.' A beanstalk! Who ever heard of anything so stupid?"

His guru bolted upright and with his dying breath he screeched in horror, "You mean it *isn't* a beanstalk?!"

### Truth

At the root of the Yoan experiment is an agreement about how we are going to explore Reality. Almost every religion on Earth claims to have special access to "The One Truth," determined by the pronouncements of some authority and the interpretation of authority by other authorities. Yoism is different -- Yoism is the "non-dogmatic religion." But where does a Yoan's basis for belief come from, and how does the Yoan community as a whole determine its truths?

Finding one's path in this world is a constant investigation of both what we desire and of what is. The process of understanding "what is," of exploring the physical limits of reality, is a process of exploring God. To Yoans, God is Reality. God is the universe. As Gandhi said, "God is Truth." God is the essence from which all existence springs forth.

In the last few centuries, since the birth of the Enlightenment, humans have discovered truly revolutionary ways of exploring Reality/God, ways that rely on personal verification -- instead of dogma -- as the foundation for all belief. We now have the opportunity, perhaps for the first time in history, to apply these understandings not only to our own search for Truth, but to a collective search for Truth by a community dedicated to acting upon its discoveries.

This chapter will demonstrate the framework of the Yoan exploration of Reality. How do we make sense of our experiences? What does "truth" mean? What does "belief" mean? How do we determine what we consider to be correct and incorrect given what we know?

In other words: On what basis do we decide how we live our lives, how to pursue our values and express our meanings?

It is worth noting here that sometimes we may not feel a need to understand how things work, or we may not care whether our understandings are accurate or not. There are many things we do which are so trivial they just aren't worth examining in great detail. Also, sometimes we are not looking for Truth, so much as we are simply trying to generate ideas, express ourselves, or just have fun. And sometimes knowing the truth doesn't actually help us do what is right. For example, for many people the fear of approaching someone yo is attracted to is overwhelming. But even after yo realizes that there is nothing really to be afraid of, that the fear is being exaggerated in yo's head -- after all, rejection lands yo back in, more or less, the same place as doing nothing -- the fear still exists, and knowing the truth of the matter does nothing to compel yo to act.

Thus simply recognizing the truth is not always sufficient for achieving our goals. We must also cultivate our inner strength so we can overcome fear and other obstacles. Our focus on truth in this chapter should not be taken as an indication that we believe that Truth is all that matters.

Indeed, we believe that meaning and values -- how we *feel* about things -- are the "masters" and truth is simply a tool we use in the service of pursuing the goals we desire.

Truth is only important insofar as we want to have a good understanding of what the outcome of our actions (or inactions) will be, so that we can achieve what we *want*. And indeed, in this context, Truth is extremely important.

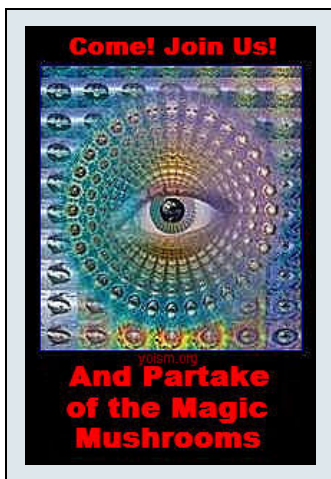
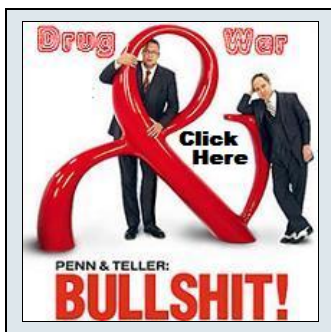
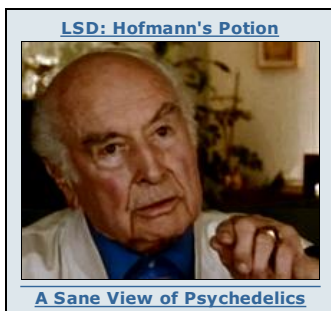
We begin this chapter by considering how we as individuals might choose to make sense of our world. We then next extend this to describe how a community of people can apply a similar process to create a basis for collective action. After all, if we hope to act as a community to better our world, then clearly we will need to decide what to do!

There will be disagreements in our community. If the community can take action only on those things for which there is no disagreement, then clearly we will either not be able to act on anything or, in order to maintain complete agreement on the things we hold most dear, we will need to keep the community exceedingly small.

Disagreement is healthy and beautiful. Diversity is just as key to a healthy community as it is to a healthy ecosystem. We aim to cultivate a thriving ecosystem of ideas. Ideas discarded as worthless today are often the ideas revolutionizing human thinking tomorrow. We must not close off avenues of exploration, even if they seem fruitless to some. On the other hand, we will need to determine which ideas we are going to use as a basis for deciding how we spend our community resources and energy.

How do we maintain this diversity, this freedom of thought and exploration for each member, and at the same time determine a foundation for our community, a basis for collective action? What would it mean for "the community to consider something to be right or wrong?" What does it mean for the Book of Yo to be Open Source, democratic, and consensual?

We consider all these questions in this chapter. Let us begin by considering what we mean by truth in a more personal way.



We need your help!

Yes, we are asking for money. Without resources, nothing gets done in the Real

world. The question is [how we handle those resources & why you should trust us & invest in Yoism.](#)

**at least the war on the middle class is going well.**

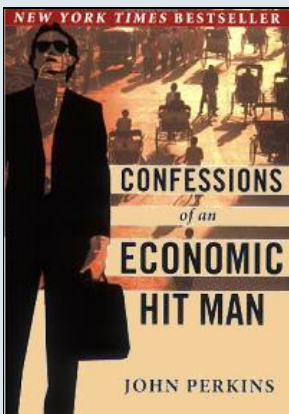
With Stephen Colbert, Jon Stewart, John Hodgman, Ralph Nader, Lou Dobbs, Michael Moore, Dubya, Bono, & a cast of thousands

[Help Us Develop a](#)



[Yoan Perspective on Property Rights](#)

[Corporate Globalization?](#)



[or "Global Slavelization?"](#)

[The Reality Note](#)



[The International](#)



and

[The Animated Version](#)

[Deadly Memes](#)



[How to make Christian or Islamic fundamentalists out of innocent children.](#)

## A Thought Experiment

Imagine you are born into the world. You know nothing. You understand little or nothing of what is going on around you. You have only new experiences. Experience of color, sound, touch, taste, smell. Experience of feeling, of happiness, sadness, anger, love. Experience of thought, of awareness, consciousness. Your consciousness is immersed in an erratic sea of color, sounds, and sensations. You have not yet learned to distinguish different kinds of experiences, or even necessarily how to "think." (This is *not* necessarily the state into which humans are born. Remember, this is a thought *experiment*, a hypothetical investigation for the purposes of illustration. It is not intended to prove anything, but rather to get us started thinking.)

How do you make sense of all this? At first perhaps you are totally lost and confused. Soon you discover you have the ability to "act." You have the ability to affect your experience through your will. You discover you can move your limbs and you discover all the sensations of moving your limbs, seeing your hands open and close in front of your eyes, feeling the contraction of muscle, or the texture of the clothing of your mother as your hands bump into her accidentally. Thus you have discovered will, action, and their effect on sensation.

You discover that you can affect your experience in predictable ways. You learn to use your body. Eventually you come to understand the concept of having a body, and all the useful corollaries of that concept. You start to understand notions of "three dimensional space", of "objects", of "time," though you will not name them as such until much later. You start to understand not only your ability to affect your experience, but also the limitations of your ability to affect experience.

Indeed, the process of becoming comfortable with those limitations can be very frustrating! For early on in the process, you discovered that you "wanted" certain experiences and that you did not want others. This discovery is your aesthetic appreciation, and it will ultimately grow up to be your sense of morality, good, bad, ugly, beautiful, etc.

As we continue to learn more about what we want, it becomes increasingly important to discover how to get what we want! Thus we extend and refine the notion of having a body -- we determine the ways it helps us to interact with the world and the ways it limits us. We discover what is under our control and what is not. This is the process of learning about our relationship with God. In other words, it's a process of coming up against the limits and possibilities imposed by Reality, limits and possibilities not defined by our wishes, demands, feelings, and desires.

When we face God/Reality, we must surrender completely. Incomplete surrender--i.e., magical thinking, ironically encouraged by all the major religions--is a turning away from Truth as presented to us by The Almighty One whose name has been said to be "I am that I am," or in other words, "I am The Truth, the Reality you must accept and to which you must surrender." Note that "surrender" doesn't mean *acceptance* of the current *state* of Reality -- we are describing how we come to understand how we can (and cannot) influence the form that Reality takes, the form of the That-Which-Is.

At first, we have all these experiences and yet only a very limited ability to influence them. We never have direct access to the underlying construction of our experiences. We cannot control them perfectly, or understand exactly why they happen. What is it that gives rise to these experiences? What is it over which we have no control? What is the "given" that we must come to terms with? We can label this entity God, Reality, Tao, The Unknowable Underlying Universal Field that Manifests All that Exists. The Yoan community labels it YO. YO is the infinite unknowable essence that structures our experience to be what it is.

One might reasonably ask: How do I know that there is anything outside of me creating my experience? Perhaps I am dreaming, and there exists nothing but myself? For the purposes of the thought experiment we are defining "self" as what we are aware of, what we are conscious of. Whatever gives rise to our experiences is outside of us. One could argue that we are dreaming, and that it is our "brain" that is making everything up. But to say your brain (as opposed to the whole universe) is making everything up, some sort of line would have to be drawn between your brain and the oxygen which it uses, and the calories which they use, and the skulls which keep them together, and the air pressure which helps keep those together, etc. We are drawing a more fundamental line between what we are aware of and what we are not. It is a line that especially makes sense in our experiment. In this sense we know that we (our conscious selves) are not creating the world, and any speculation about the nature of what is beyond our conscious awareness -- that which constrains, limits, and structures our experience -- is just that, speculation (however useful it may be). Still, we label this Almighty Essence -- almighty in the sense that we cannot control it except by following Its rules (the laws of nature, of Its structure) -- God, or YO.

God is not an *explanation* for that which we cannot explain, rather it's a *name* for the mystery of existence.

The process of our lives is the process of exploring our relationship to this mystery. The relationship comes in the form of experience.

As we continue to explore God we learn more and more about YO's predictability. We recognize patterns: sequences of experiences which lead to other experiences. We learn to utilize those patterns to get what we want from the world. We discover that when we cry we get fed, and thus when we desire to be fed we cry. As we learn more about our world we eventually -- and often unconsciously -- start to build mental models of how things work so that we can effectively get what we want.

And this brings us to the main point of the chapter. There are, of course, many possible approaches to your relationship with the world, and the paths you choose to follow depend in large part on the models which you believe accurately describe the way the universe functions. What is the best way to determine those models?

## Models

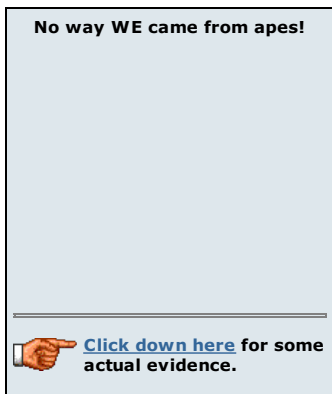
There is a lot to say about our mental models. They are ubiquitous -- we use them continually without even realizing it. Every time we walk down the street we are employing a vast web of





interconnected models which help us navigate. Our models regard the movement of cars, the behavior of traffic lights, reactions we expect to get from people, how our legs and bodies work, what the weather will be like. We have many, many understandings which help us predict how the world will behave, thus how we can navigate through it. Most of these understandings are probably never consciously articulated, and yet they form the basis for our thoughts and actions. One of the more amazing aspects of all this is how accurate our models are!

We are rarely just totally and completely dumbfounded by things. It is rare that events occur in our lives that our models predict are absolutely impossible. This is true for a few reasons. We are generally pretty good at adjusting our models as we encounter new situations, and over time our models become sophisticated enough to account for quite a bit, including very unlikely scenarios. Our expectations for how a person will react to something we say, for example, tend to include a range of possibilities, some of which seem more likely than others. We are often surprised when one of the less likely possibilities comes back to us, but that doesn't leave us with a broken model. Sometimes we encounter things which are more intensely surprising.



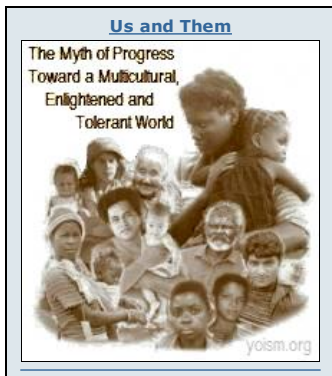
For instance, if you were to say something to someone and, apparently as a result of the words you spoke, their head separated from their body and floated away. That would be surprising on an entirely different level. Clearly, some of your models might need to be adjusted to account for your new experience.

It may sound dry or technical, but one way of understanding many of the challenges in figuring out how to get what we want is a problem of model selection. How do we construct models and how do we decide which ones will work the best in predicting our experience, i.e. which ones will be most effective in the pursuit of our meanings?

To begin with, it's worth defining a few terms to make the conversation easier to understand. These are terms which are of course generally used in our culture -- indeed, we have already been using them -- and here we simply give them more precise definitions that help to clarify what we mean while still fitting with the way we are comfortable using them.

**Experience / Fact:**

One of the most basic of all terms, experience is somewhat difficult to define. An experience is a unit, a particular piece/part of consciousness. Experience consists of our sensations (sight, touch, hearing, smell, taste, kinesthetic, etc.), our thoughts, and our emotions. You can think of experience as anything you feel or are aware of. In this discussion experience is equated with fact because, though we do not necessarily know what, if anything, outside of our experience itself the experience refers to or represents (i.e., whether the experience is consistent with some underlying unexperienced Reality), the one thing we can know for sure is that we are having it!



**Reality (YO):**

That which gives rise to all experience. Reality is everything that underlies our experiences. As humans we can only know our experiences, and we generally have a feeling that there is something "out there" that is giving rise to and structures these experiences. If such a thing exists, however, we can only know our experiences of it -- we cannot know it perfectly and directly, and thus we say in a sense that Reality (with a big R) is unknowable.

**Theory:**

Any model (story) which predicts or describes our experiences. This is what this chapter is all about. The way we think about how the world works in order to predict and describe our experience, with the goal of being able to have more control over our experiences (and live better lives.)



**Truth:**

Theories (models, stories) which accurately predict our experiences. Perfect Truth is the best possible model which predicts/describes what will happen (i.e. predicts our experiences) perfectly. If it is impossible to fully predict what will happen (because there is a degree of randomness in the universe, as postulated by certain scientific models) the best possible model would predict the future with probabilities in perfect accordance with what we experience. Perfect Truth (i.e., with a big T) is not a model that we can assume is humanly-knowable. There are also imperfect truths -- which is what most people mean when they say something is definitely true or is The truth -- models which have never been wrong in predicting our experience (so far), and partial truths, models which have imperfect accuracy (i.e. sometimes predict incorrectly) but yield the best predictions we can make at the current time.



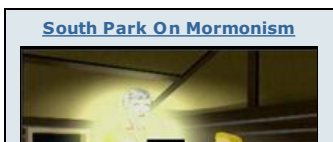
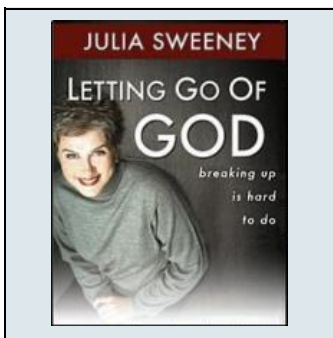
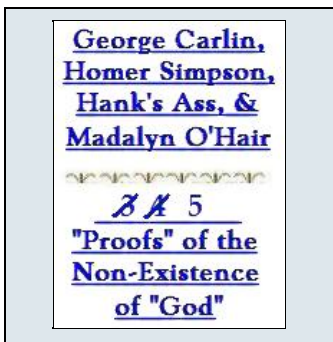
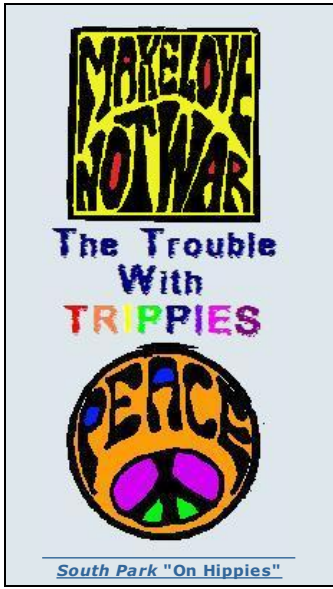
**Belief :**

A model which a person thinks gives a very accurate picture of the world. The person expects the model to accurately predict his/her experience, and thus we tend to call these models "truth," i.e., we "believe in" them. We often have beliefs which seem to predict experience well but which we later realize are unfounded -- i.e. they turn out to predict certain aspects of experience very poorly. Generally, when we say "X is true," what we mean is that "I believe X," or "I expect X to be true."



**Determining Our Beliefs**

While these definitions are philosophically technical and may come across as abstract, it should be clear that the question of model selection is really a way into answering the question of how we determine what we believe. This is a complicated question and, like all such questions, we are still learning more as we continue to accumulate more experience. Presented here are our conclusions up to this point. Like everything else in this book, this is not dogma. That said, we deeply believe in the following approach to truth. In other words, we believe that the following



is true (as we just defined truth).

### Good Evidence

We know that humans have a tendency to construct false beliefs about the world from their experience and from their experiences of what others have told them. We have been doing it throughout known history and continue to do so.

We know this is true for two reasons. The first is that we often discover evidence which flatly contradicts our beliefs. For example, perhaps your experience of the world (including what others have told you) has led you to have a sincere belief that the sun will not rise on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011. If you wake up on that Friday morning to the experience of sunlight streaming through your bedroom window, then it should be clear to you that your belief was false.

The other reason that we know humans have a tendency to form false beliefs is that if two groups of people have beliefs which conflict in a manner that the truth of one makes the other belief necessarily false, then even if there is no good evidence either way, it is reasonable to assume that *at least* one group is wrong. They can't both be right.

This is an extremely important baseline assumption about our relationship to what we believe is true. Since we know that humans are error prone, we must be careful when deciding what to believe because we don't want to base important life decisions on false beliefs. False beliefs are *inaccurate* predictors about what will happen when we act -- of course we do not want to invest our lives in actions that will not yield what we seek, especially as we endeavor to create a better, saner society.

Thus we must have a solid basis for deciding what constitutes good evidence for a claim about what is true. This is a very difficult question, and something which people have been arguing about since the beginning of philosophy.

The most obvious criteria for a supported belief is that it must not contradict the available body of evidence. Thus if you believe that wearing magnets on your arms makes you immortal or immune from disease, and you die or fall ill, obviously your belief is unfounded. What you thought was true is actually and unequivocally false.

But what about beliefs for which there is no evidence either way? For instance, what about a belief in the afterlife, or in reincarnation. You cannot *disprove* the existence of something which cannot be directly experienced. Since there is no verifiable evidence for or against these kinds of beliefs, does that make each belief equally valid?

Occam's Razor is a principle which separates theories in which each part is necessary to explain and predict our experiences accurately from theories which include parts that are unnecessary to account for (explain) what we have experienced and which add nothing to the accuracy of our predictions. The actual principle is often stated as, "one should not increase, beyond what is necessary, the number of entities required to explain anything." In other words, to discover what part of an explanation is supported by the evidence, one can strip away assumptions and see if the remaining "shaved" explanation still accounts for the evidence. If it does, then the additional assumptions were not supported by (were not needed to explain) the evidence.

Does this mean that an explanation which requires more assumptions is wrong, or less likely to be correct? No (assuming of course that it doesn't contradict the evidence). It simply means that there is no reason to believe the additional assumptions. The additional assumptions are fictional -- they are made-up stories in the sense that there are an infinite number of unnecessary assumptions that could be invented that have no impact, one way or the other, on explaining or predicting our experiences.

Thus when explaining the path of stars across our sky, the Church's official doctrine,

which placed the earth at the center of the universe, was incredibly complex and required the postulation of a myriad of crystalline spheres in which the stars were embedded, moving in complex interaction with each other. Copernicus, and later on Galileo, championed a theory which accounted for the motion of the stars (and other astronomical observations) more simply, by putting a spinning earth in orbit around the sun which allowed much simpler elliptical orbits to describe the movements. If the crystalline spheres theory can account for more of the data and yield better predictions than the new, simpler model, then we would have to hold on to it as a possible model with needed extra parts. But it did not -- the crystalline spheres added complex assumptions that predicted nothing. Thus they were fictions invented with no supporting evidence. They had as much evidence to support them as invisible "star fairies" that guide the stars across the sky, or an infinite number of other possible postulates that were not needed to account for the available data.

Identifying just those beliefs which are supported by the evidence, and rooting out the additional beliefs for which there is no support, is a vital part of determining if there is good evidence for a claim, i.e., whether the elements of a model are useful in explaining and predicting, or whether they belong to an infinite set of unsupported inventions (fictions).

### The Importance of Occam's Razor

There are many challenges and pitfalls in our search for truth. If we sincerely want to discover truth then it is imperative to understand those pitfalls and do our best to avoid them. Perhaps the biggest pitfall we face is our own bias. Francis Bacon said it succinctly: "Man prefers to believe what he prefers to be true." A true spiritual search must be willing to face up to the ugly and uncomfortable, just as much as to the beautiful.

As a community of truth seekers we do not want to simply multiply our biases. We do not want the biases of the first members of the community to forever infect and obstruct the search for truth. Our search must be guided by principles which can allow people without those biases to join in our efforts and to illuminate where we first went wrong.

Intuition is perhaps both our strongest ally and our strongest enemy in our search for truth. Intuition is defined as "A sense of something not evident or





deducible; an impression" (from dictionary.com). In other words, intuitions are *feelings* we have about truth in the absence of evidence ("not evident") or logic ("not deducible"). Feelings are our reactions to things, our desires, our moral and aesthetic judgments. They are often what we want, wish, or desire from the world. In this form, feelings alone don't tell us much about how the world works, but rather they reflect what we want from the world. Intuitions, on the other hand, are those feelings we have about truth, about how the world works.

**Does Prayer Work?**



**The Results of a Scientific Study**

Intuition guides everything we do. As we experiment with our world, as we try to make sense of our experiences, intuition tells us where to look. It helps us find the really fruitful paths for exploration. If we are trying to figure out a puzzle, our intuition will suggest possibilities, which we will then investigate.

**Magical Thinking:**



**It's "The American Way"**

But we know from experience that intuitions are often wrong. It would be a boringly easy puzzle indeed, if every time we got a sense (a feeling) of where a piece might fit, we were right. How many of us have accused a friend of something, only to find that they were completely innocent, or guessed an answer to a test on a feeling, only for it to be wrong? While intuition is tremendously important, it is also frequently wrong. Thus we must have ways of determining the value of our intuitions on important matters because simply accepting our intuitions as truth will not do. Relying on our intuitions too strongly will make it impossible for us to understand and move past our own biases, our blind spots which often are the result of unexamined *feelings* about how the world works.

Thus we must allow our intuitions to guide our search, but not confuse our intuitions with truth. We must continually subject our intuitions to test, to see which were right or wrong.

**Creationism & Intelligent Design**




**Penn & Teller, Richard Dawkins, Bill Maher, Bill Hicks & Stephen Colbert**

Our search for truth is further complicated by another factor: for every set of experiences, there are an infinite number of explanations that account for the experience. For instance, say you remember brushing your teeth this morning. One possible interpretation of that memory is that you *did* brush your teeth this morning. Another possible interpretation is that aliens came down and implanted the memory in your brain. Or that you had a psychotic break and imagined the tooth brushing. Or that you were hypnotized and told to remember it that way. There are many explanations, probably infinite variations, that would account for the experience you have of having brushed your teeth. (These can be distinguished from those sets of beliefs which would not account for the experience you had, for instance, if someone insisted that you didn't brush your teeth *and* that you had no memory of brushing your teeth; that would be wrong.)

Of course any of these is possible, though most seem unlikely. All of them account for the evidence without contradicting the evidence. And most of them would have you act in different ways, some drastically different. So how do we decide what to believe? On what do we base our understanding of our world, and thus choose our actions? Indeed without some way to distinguish between these possibilities, there would be literally *nothing* to believe! There would be no ideas we could base our actions on and no way to navigate through life!

Since we know that our intuitions are often wrong, relying on our *feelings* about what is true is not likely to help us in choosing what to believe.

**Intelligent Design (and Creationism)**



**vs. Science: The Dover Trial**

This is why Occam's Razor is absolutely essential in our search for truth. Occam's Razor says to shave away those pieces of the explanation for which there is no evidence, leaving just the part for which there is evidence. As new evidence shows up, it will often turn out down the line that our current models are wrong or incomplete. However, as far as finding a model for living our lives -- for choosing what we believe -- our options are to either base it on the experiences we have already had, or to have an essentially random set of beliefs picked out of an infinite number of possibilities because they feel right.

Sometimes people react to this notion as a sterile view of the world. All this emphasis on rigorous standards of *evidence* leading the path through life might feel too "scientific," depriving life of the mystery and awe which makes it beautiful. We could not disagree more strongly!

**Quantum Physics**

You may need to install or update your Adobe Flash Player to view many of the videos on this site.

**Some Implications of Modern Science for Religion**

No amount of examination of our world will come close to eliminating the mystery of existence. As science has probed into the microscopic and macroscopic worlds (sub atomic and cosmological realms), the mystery and awe *increases*. Yoism proclaims that we do not need to make up fantasies for ourselves -- there is enough *real* mystery in our universe. There is so much unknown, so many deep questions, so many possibilities. When we face our experiences sincerely and honestly we become more in tune with our own spiritual potential, not less! The mysteries and wonders of What-Is far exceed the non-existent mysteries of the make believe.


## The Afterlife

Once we have established the inseparability of Occam's Razor and sincere exploration of Truth, we can achieve deeper understandings of our own life and how it makes sense for us to live. No possibilities can ever be completely ruled out. But it does make sense to sort out the understandings that are currently supported by our experience from the understandings which are not currently supported (even if *someday* they may be). This is the notion of exploring and understanding the universe so that we can discover the best way to achieve the things we want to achieve.

**Penn & Teller**



**and South Park**



So lets turn our attention for a moment to a practical application of this wisdom. There is a deep rooted human desire for life. Very few people want to stop existing. Humans, in this respect, are like every other living organism. We strive to stay alive, to live for another day. The evolutionary roots of this are well understood at this point. Organisms that did not employ every fiber of their being in the struggle to survive so that they could one day reproduce viable offspring, and pass on this will to survive, have, long ago, died out. It was only those organisms that favored life that survived to exist in our world today.<sup>1</sup>

Humans share this feature with other living organisms. Unfortunately we do eventually die.



[On The Eyes of God,  
The Shroud of Turin,  
& Bleeding Statues](#)

**Yo On Ebola,  
Sars, Aids, &  
Bird Flu**  
**AND NOW, FOR  
A LIMITED  
TIME ONLY,  
Swine Flu!**

**We need your help!**

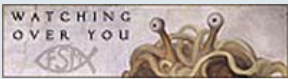
Yes, we are asking for money. Without resources, nothing gets done in the Real world. The question is [how we handle those resources & why you should trust us & invest in Yoism.](#)

**The New  
"Miracle" Links!**

[Astounding Videos of Real Miracles](#)

[Truly Amazing Illusions](#)

[Video of a Genuine Miracle \(with no trick photography!\)](#)



[Flying Spaghetti Monster?!?  
Bah. Humbug!](#)



**Creationism & Intelligent Design  
vs. SPAM**

(Spaghetti & Pulsar Activating Meatballs)

Though we often struggle right up to our last breath, there eventually comes a day when the functioning of our bodies and our brains which produces the miracle of consciousness and awareness, ceases, and with it our personal consciousness appears---based on all the available evidence---to wink out of existence.

The horror of this should not be lost on anybody. We have evolved to resist death with nearly every fiber of our beings, and yet every one of us dies. We all fail in the end. The result of this can be seen in practically every human culture, since the beginning of known human culture -- people have been proposing a cornucopia of alternative versions of reality to help cope with this eternal pain. We have concocted stories for ourselves where instead of dying we go on living forever in eternal paradise, are eventually reunited with our loved ones in the spirit world, are continually reborn in an endless series of live, etc., etc.

All these stories about the continuation of our consciousness after the deaths of our bodies have one thing in common: they propose a sea of conjectures for which there is absolutely no evidence. And, in the majority of cases, they contradict one another -- if one is right, than the vast majority of others must be wrong. In every case as we pair away these additional conjectures, we finally come down to an understanding of consciousness that exists in tandem with the functioning of a brain, the logical conclusion of which is that when the brain ceases to function, our consciousness ceases to exist.

Furthermore, many of these stories of continuing consciousness have profoundly negative impact on our world. If our world is just an illusion to prepare us for entry into a land of immortality (or a series of births, deaths, and rebirths leading to eventual release from this suffering called life and entry into nirvana), then we diminish the importance of our actual lives. Indeed, this is the goal of such beliefs: by making the life we will eventually lose relatively unimportant, a belief in the afterlife lessens the agonizing sting of death.

But if this is not the real life, if this is not the one we should worry about, how can such a belief not help to make us react less strongly to the horror around us, the destruction of our world, and even to enable us to participate in destructive horrors. Humanity will be much better off when we can shed these unsubstantiated (and contradictory!) fairy tales about a continuing consciousness, and truly embrace our lives as our only known shot at being. This is our one chance at existence, and we would all be better off if people were trying to make the most of it.

We don't claim to have evidence *against* the existence of an afterlife. However, the tales of continued personal existence after death seem highly unlikely to be true because: (1) they meet all the conditions of wishful thinking as they are the prototypical notion that we *want* to believe, (2) as they contradict one another, what is the likelihood that the *one* you were taught is *the* correct one (out of the thousands that have been taught to millions of other people), and (3) there is no evidence for any of them and thus they meet the conditions for being considered fictions, i.e., each is one of an infinite number of possible stories with no evidence to support any of them.

Imagine someone claims that the lights don't go out when you flip the switch -- instead the light exists forever in an eternal "afterlight." That certainly is possible. But what the evidence suggests is that the light stops being generated when electricity stops running through the circuit. We don't understand exactly how electricity running through a circuit creates light -- we don't even understand what electricity, charge, electrons or photons really are. But the model which includes the "afterlight" includes one of an *infinite* number of possible unnecessary inventions with no evidence to support them. We tend to call such invented stories fictions or fairy tales. When we shave the "afterlight" away, we are left with a cessation of the generation of light when the electricity stops flowing.

Similarly, when we shave the afterlife away we are left with a cessation of the generation of an individual's consciousness when the brain stops functioning. Some may say that doesn't account for the evidence of many people's *feelings* that life goes on after death.

However, we already know that people often have feelings about how the world works that do not correspond to reality, especially when those feelings and beliefs represent strongly desired wishes and prevent the experience of nearly intolerable pain. So the best explanation for those feelings (in the case where they cannot actually be verified with evidence) would be to recognize that while it's *possible* they are correct, there is *no evidence* of their being correct. Therefore, a belief in that truth is an unsupported belief, one among an infinite number of possibilities, a fiction.

By denying the existence of death, by hanging on to the notion of some sort of continued personal existence after death, we make it impossible to *truly* spiritually prepare for death. By accepting the apparent reality, we can *really* prepare ourselves, and achieve a deeper appreciation of every moment of our lives.

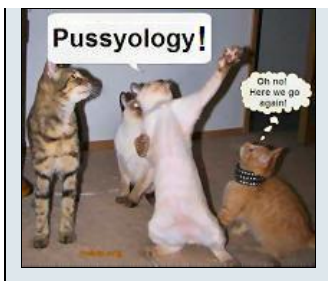
### Open-mindedness

One of the most important aspects of our exploration of reality is that we keep our minds open. There is always the possibility of acquiring new evidence which leads us to new and different understandings. By acting on the knowledge we currently have, we are not saying that we must assume our understandings are correct! There always exists the possibility of one day discovering that all our current truths are indeed wrong. One of the central tenets of Yoism is for there to be no dogma. Only by keeping our minds continually open to new possibilities can we live up to that goal.

## Chapter 3: Community– The Open Source Truth Process

*And if I am to carry on the inquiry by myself I will first of all remark that all of us should*





And if I am to carry on the inquiry by myself, I will first of all remark that . . . all of us should have an ambition to know what is true and what is false . . . for the discovery of the truth is a common good. And now I will proceed to argue according to my own notion. But if any of you think that I arrive at conclusions which are untrue you must interpose and refute me, for I do not speak from any certain knowledge of what I am saying; I am an enquirer like yourselves, and therefore, if my opponent says anything which is of force, I shall be the first to agree with him.

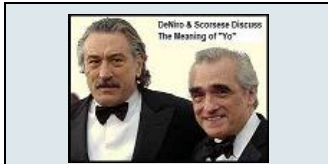
Socrates, in Plato's Dialogue, *Gorgias*

The world is in crisis. Though we have had technological revolutions, we have not had the social and moral revolutions we need in order to use that technology safely and sanely. Our use of our technology is in fact so poor that many studies of happiness and fulfillment show that our technological advances don't help! Humanity needs a cultural revolution that matches the industrial revolution. For the first time, we have the opportunity to organize our community around a sane understanding of Reality -- truths that can be justified -- rather than around competing received dogmas.

The mission of Yoism is to create a community of Truth seekers. Only through better understanding of God can we hope to build a world which reflects our hopes and dreams. We will need to work together with a common understanding, not only of what our hopes and dreams are -- what is good and beautiful, and what is not -- but also with a common understanding of how we might achieve those hopes and dreams. As individuals we have much power over our own lives, but only to a limited degree. We exist in the context of a society and culture which significantly limits how we can go about our lives.

The more people we have working with us, the more power we have. And if we are going to work together we will need a way to come to agreements about what our individual experiences tell us about the best ways to interact with Yo.

But there are other very important reasons to engage in the process of truth seeking with others. Consider the parable of the blind men and the elephant. There are a number of blind men around an elephant, each one near a different part of the animal. When one blind man reaches out he feels a tusk, and thus states that an elephant is like a smooth, thick, strong branch of a tree. When another reaches out he feels a trunk and conceives of the elephant as like a long and flexible arm. Another reaches out and feels the elephant's thin flat ears and says an elephant is like the animal skins used to make shoes. Another grabs hold of the tail and says an elephant is like a snake. One touches the elephant's side and declares an elephant to be like a wall, while yet another wraps his arms around an elephant's leg and declares that an elephant is like a tree trunk. Each one tries to understand what it is that they are feeling, but that have only limited information. When they start talking to each other and comparing their experiences they can either get into violent arguments over the true nature of elephants---they would then be acting like humanity typically has over most of our history---or, if they work together, they can start to piece together a more accurate understanding of the elephant. Each person has had experiences from which to draw, about the nature of reality. Of course, our experiences are incomplete. It is as if we are grasping at the parts of an elephant. By engaging with other peoples' experiences as well as our own we can vastly expand the pool of information available.



Robert DeNiro & Martin Scorsese  
On the Meaning of Yo



Jon Stewart & The Wombat Join  
Them



Thou Shalt Not Lie

## Open Source Software

The concept of "open source" development is perhaps best exemplified in the open source movement in computer software. For many decades, computer programming was done by private companies that would jealously guard the rights to use and modify their programs. They claimed, that only if they could have complete control over how their software was used, and how it grew, would they have the necessary incentive to continue the tremendous expenditure of resources it took them to create the software.

The open source movement turned this model on its head. Instead of carefully guarding the source code, they threw it open to the world, and said give us your feedback, your ideas, and your experience. Help us make this software better. Though the movement is still in its infancy, it has already succeeding in becoming a dominant producer of some of the world's most commonly used software, out competing software giants such as Microsoft in creating the dominant software package for controlling the movement of information on the Internet (Apache) and in creating the fastest growing, sole competition to Microsoft Windows, the Linux OS.. How has the movement made such incredible progress in such a short time? One answer seems to be that by inviting large number of people to participate they can harness their collective creativity in ways a closed source program simply cannot hope to do.

## Open Source Truth

This process is one of the inspirations for the Yoan community. As we strive to learn more about how our world works, we need the creative power of many minds. A single person sitting in their living room thinking all day cannot hope to achieve the advances in understanding that we are after. Thought is evolutionary. Ideas one person has spawn ideas in another person. The more we can free people to express their ideas, and hear other's ideas the more progress we will make in finding the most useful ideas.

After all, if our truth -- what we can know to be so -- really is founded on and limited by our experience, and if everyone is encouraged to embrace the notion that personal verification is the foundation for all belief, then each person's individual experience is just as sacred as anyone else's. Every individual in the Yoan community is encouraged to contribute their divine wisdom -- the individual's personal, direct experience of Reality -- to the community's collective, cumulative knowledge of That-Which-Is, and to challenge the community's consensus with the parts of their individual experience that do not fit within the current consensus. Of course we cannot "elect" reality by popular vote -- even if most people agree that the earth is flat, it isn't, and no one ever fell off the edge. The empirical method described in this chapter is the arbiter of truth. But the experiences we try to explain and understand are Our experiences, all of which are considered grist for the empirical mill.

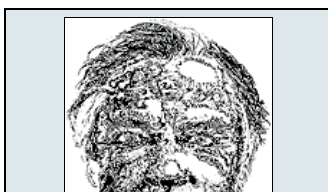
In contrast, traditional religions elevate the experiences of special, "holy" individuals who, alone, have special access to truth. They then put the power to modify our understanding of what is true into the hands of a few individuals and limits their power to revising the



The Power of Nightmares



The Sexual Witchhunts of Pastor Ted Haggard, Congressman Mark Foley, Lawmaker Bob Allen, & Mitt Romney

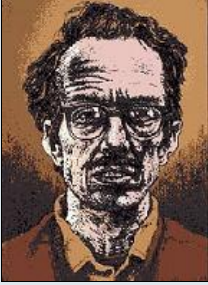




**Timothy Leary's  
How to Operate  
Your Brain  
An Owner's Manual**

**Philosophy Is a Team Sport**

with a preface by  
R. Crumb



interpretation of a received wisdom from those supposedly divine individuals who had unique, supernatural access to the perfect truth. Yoism is a religion that puts the power into the hands of the community, recognizing that each member's experience provides a divinely unique perspective of Reality.

This is not to say that there won't be leaders in our community, individuals which have set themselves apart from others by virtue of their skill and insight. We should not be afraid to honor those among us who are exceptional in their abilities. However, we must always remember that every individual, from the most skilled among us to the least skilled, is a human being whose experience of the world is both limited and divine.

### Consensual Truth Making: Embracing Conflict

So the search for truth in the context of a community of other truth seekers is invaluable for two reasons. First, it helps us find deeper truths and, secondly, our community must be large if we are ever to have significant impact on helping the world to act sanely.

But now we are faced with what would seem to be, on the surface, a dilemma. We must balance respecting the diversity of experience with the need to keep the community unified enough to take action in the world. How can the community actually say things about the world without limiting the spectrum of thought and debate? If we ever come to enough of a conclusion on an issue to say anything about it, there is always the danger that the conclusion could become dogma. And if we as a community are making statements about the world, does that mean that everybody in the community must completely agree about each issue?

We need diversity of thought. We also need for the community as a whole to come to agreements so community resources can be channeled in meaningful ways. We should strive to find as much agreement as possible so that everybody's voice is included.

However, most people most of the time will disagree with something the community is doing. This is good and natural. This does not indicate that they are wrong necessarily or that the community is wrong necessarily. Either could be true and it is only through continued consideration and exploration that the answer will become clear. Perhaps both sides are missing a crucial aspect of reality, perhaps only one is. However, we value that diversity which allows one person to have a different assessment of reality than the community as a whole has come to. It is precisely this diversity which gives our community the material it needs to draw on for new and better ways of understanding the truth.

Thus, if as a community we affirm that the existence of a conscious afterlife is highly improbable, we are not telling people that they *must* believe that. We are saying that the Yoan community as a whole has evaluated the evidence and has come to this conclusion.

If you see that the community is wrong, you have two options. You can ignore the discrepancy if it just doesn't feel that important to you. Or you can engage the discrepancy, try to spread a deeper understanding throughout the community, as well as try to understand the wisdom (if any) in the community's position. Hopefully, but probably not in all cases, a resolution will be found if both sides are truly open to the exploration.

Disagreeing with community agreements is not just not a problem, but it is in fact absolutely essential to the healthy functioning of our community. On the other hand, there can be times when an individual feels that the community is so wrong about so many things and there just doesn't seem to be progress being made in resolving important disagreements. In this case, ultimately, someone may decide that they are not longer in tune with the community, and they may leave. This is a possibility that we must be open to.

### Open Source Truth In Action: Revising The Book of Yo

The Open Source Truth Process is currently exemplified by the words in this Book, the current articulation of the central beliefs of our community. In this Book you have read about this process and how it remains open to everyone, inviting all in the community to participate. However, the question remains: how does this book actually respond to the contributions of individuals in the community?

In other words, how can *you* revise the Book of Yo? The process currently consists of the following steps:

- I. Read the Book. Get acquainted with the ideas, discuss them with others in the community, do your best to understand the meaning behind the words.
- II. Write a Proposal. If after carefully considering what is written here, you believe you have insight into how to improve the Book so that it expresses something more consistent with your personal experience of the world, then the next step is to draft a proposal. Delineate, in writing, your recommended changes, along with your reasoning.
- III. Propose the Proposal. Submit the proposal to all Book Yoans for consideration. Currently this is done by posting comments to an email list at [consensus@yoism.org](mailto:consensus@yoism.org). Book Yoans are members of the Yoan community who have expressed a serious commitment to working on and improving the Book of Yo so that it more accurately and completely approaches truth.
- IV. Voicing Objections. Problems with the proposed changes are articulated. The criteria for judging the quality of a proposal is based on the question "Does this make sense to me?"
- V. Working for Consensus. If disagreement about the proposal persists, those who continue to object have the responsibility of working with you to create a revision that satisfies all those concerned.
- VI. When consensus among Book Yoans is reached, the proposed changes are incorporated and a new version of the Book of Yo is released.
- VII. If consensus cannot be reached, and the objectors have put in a good faith effort to negotiate a solution, the proposal is put to a 3/4 vote.

**Tom Cruise Takes on  
Lord Psychopharm  
& His Psychiatrists of  
the Round Tablets**



WAR OF THE WORDS

**South Park On Scientology**



**Antidepressant Pushers, Users,  
& School Shooters**



**Authority  
vs  
Leadership**





## Book Yoans

Everyone is invited to come to Yoan meetings and community gatherings and participate in Yoan worship and in Yoan projects. We welcome the participation of all, in discussion, creative suggestions, stories, song writing, rituals, and other insights.

Yoans are people who have come to believe in the truths contained in The Book of Yo, who have made a decision to participate in the Yoan community, who support Yoan projects, and who have made this decision clear to other Yoans. All Yoans are invited to participate in discussion and dialogs about The Book of Yo, and to make suggestions about how to improve it.

However, not everybody who contributes to discussion is immediately considered a Book Yoan whose vote will be part of the consensus. Why is this?

The discussion and development of the Yoan doctrine is important and sacred to Yoans. It is necessary to ensure that the process is not disrupted by people who are not committed to full participation, to listening and understanding others' viewpoints, and to being sincere and kind in discussion.

Only people willing to work toward mutually agreeable solutions can become Book Yoans -- by the nature of the type of consensus for which we continually strive, a Book Yoan can block full consensus on any issue. Such powers of opposition obligate Book Yoans to be sincere and committed in their engagement with the process.

## Becoming a Book Yoan

To become a Book Yoan, it is necessary to first participate in the Yoan community, study the beliefs of Yoism and the existing Book of Yo, and participate in the discussion that leads to revision of the Book. One must participate in the discussion for a while to get an understanding of the Open Source Truth Process and the culture through it functions.

Once you have spent a significant amount of time participating and contributing to the dialogs that are used to modify the Book of Yo, you are eligible to become a Book Yoan.

After you have participated in these ways, have gotten to know the community (and some members of the community have gotten to know you), and you thoroughly understand the beliefs of Yoism, you announce that you would like to become a Book Yoan.

Shortly thereafter a ceremony will be held to welcome you as a Book Yoan. The ceremony begins with other Book Yoans asking questions to ascertain your understanding of The Book of Yo. Next you must fully embrace the essential beliefs of Yoism. Remember, if there were beliefs that did not make sense to you, then you would have been expected to have discussed them with other Yoans and to have tried to understand why the beliefs made sense to them. If the beliefs still did not make sense to you, then you are expected to have worked with other Book Yoans to find a way to have changed the articulation so that it made sense both to you and others in the community.

It is assumed that for many people The Book of Yo will need to be changed for them to be able to embrace it fully. This is good! This is how The Book of Yo improves, coming closer to being a description of Yo's True Manifestation.

When these conditions have been met, you are a Book Yoan.

This is *not* meant to be an exclusive group. All who have demonstrated their participation, their willingness to invest time and resources, and belief in Yoism can expect to be accepted as Book Yoans if they want to participate more directly in the evolution of the Book of Yo.

## Proclaiming the Truth Together: Overcoming the Fear of Religion

"We have The Truth. The belief systems which dominate our world are delusional. Yoan beliefs are better."

How can a Yoan say such things?

There seems to be a terrible irony in such statements coming out of a Yoan's mouth. Of all the types of people on this planet, certainly a *Yoan* -- an individual dedicated to sincere open-mindedness and the beauty of diversity of experience -- can understand what is wrong with saying "We have the Truth" and "they are deluded." Such attitudes towards one's own beliefs have left our planet littered with millions (billions?) of dead killed in the name of this or that Truth, a fervent and fanatic belief which is, in fact, false.

Such belief system chauvinism is the source of the us/them dichotomy that Yoans deplore. This is the closed-minded dogmatically righteous attitude which we know has historically justified the worst evils humanity has ever seen, and which continues to underlie the sort of ethnic and cultural brutality we see all over the world today. We must not emulate such an attitude. We simply cannot go there. We know how dangerous dynamite is, so we would be foolish to play with it carelessly. Just so, proclaiming the Truth -- fanatically believing that your truth is better than someone else's -- has proven to be far more dangerous than any explosive; after all, without ideological belief, explosives are not routinely used to blow up human beings.

But hold on. Wait a minute. Osama Bin Laden, George Bush, Pat Robertson, Dick Cheney, Trent Lott, the Pope. All of these leaders are all wielding ideological dynamite with impunity. They toss it around like they are playing with water balloons. In their fervent belief in the superiority of their truths, they are blind to how dangerous such dynamite is.

What is the nature of this dynamite called ideology, belief chauvinism, absolute certainty about the superiority of our theology? Is it just coincidence that virtually every known culture has a system of shared beliefs and values in which their truth is The Truth, the correct story of

[My God Can Beat Up Your God!](#)



[Have a Nice Day!](#)

[The IRS recognizes Yo, Inc. as a public charity.](#)

March 8, 2005

[The Boston Globe](#)

Jan 11, 2004

[Version 0.2 of The Book Of Yo is here!](#)

Web Hosting by

 GAIA Host Collective



creation, and/or provides the correct understanding of the purpose of life and how one should live? The evidence suggests that such universal phenomena have their roots in fundamental aspects of the human psyche. No, we are not claiming that there is a "dogma center" in the brain (next to the hypothalamus, to the left of the amygdala) or any such nonsense. But when fundamental human cravings and concerns universally lead to the creation of religious (or pseudo-religious) ideologies (ranging from the standard religions to the nationalistic, racist beliefs of Nazi Germany and WWII Japan to the righteous murderous beliefs of the Bolsheviks and Maoists), can we really claim that this is just a repetitive accident? There seems to be a fundamental tendency for groups of people to organize their lives around an ideology and to use such ideologies to attack others or defend one's group from attack by others.

If this is so, if there is a hunger in the human spirit for a communal belief system that exalts one's group (and one's group's beliefs) over others, then this may be the source of the enormously powerful dynamite that humanity's leaders have historically wielded.

Yes, it is extremely dangerous. It is dangerous to the exact extent that it is powerful. And yet all of the world's current leaders have no compunction about playing with this incredibly powerful and dangerous "stuff." We could say -- as many would argue we should -- "Let's not touch such a destructive substance. Let's swear off the use of such destructive nonsense. And, certainly, let's not join those who play with such poison."

It's a great idea. Sort of like, "Let's all disarm and stop fighting wars." or "What if they staged a war and nobody came?" If only we could get everyone to lay down their arms at once. But what if we do and they don't? So be it, says the pacifist. And if the pacifist lives within an empire protected by warriors willing to use weapons (for example, in the US) and to honor the pacifist even when yo resists the leaders, then the pacifist may flourish. Gandhi could stare down the British Empire. Martin Luther King could shame racist America into changing its laws. But whatever happened to the pacifists in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, or Tianamen Square? You can't use pacifism (unilateral disarmament) against those who possess military might and have no compunction against committing mass murder.

Since ideological thinking (the dynamite which is belief system chauvinism) almost universally justifies the use of murderous force against wrong thinkers, we cannot fight destructive ideologies using unilateral disarmament. We can give up, exit stage left, and leave our children's world to those who think that they are fully justified in their ideologically based hatreds and their certainty that "God (Destiny, Truth, etc.) is on their side." We can sit the game out on the sidelines as our world is literally destroyed.

Or, we can face the simple fact that we can't build a tunnel through a mountain with firecrackers: We must use dynamite. And if we use dynamite, we are playing a dangerous game. Whenever a construction project is big enough, some people are almost sure to die -- insurance companies actually estimate the number of deaths *expected* on a major construction project.

We either have the hubris to handle dynamite with full knowledge of how dangerous it is, or we leave the power to those who do have such hubris -- and have the idiocy to be oblivious to the extreme danger.

But how can we do this? How can we be proud to call ourselves Yoans, fully aware of the destructive potential of belief superiority, and at the same time insist that we "know better?" How can a Yoan play with dynamite even though we know how dangerous it is?

The answer is that we aren't willing to use dynamite *even though* we know it's dangerous. We're not saying, "Well, it's dangerous and destructive and wrong, but if they can do it so can we." No, the fact is that the knowledge of our game -- the understanding of how dangerous fervent belief can be -- is what will prevent us from crossing over the line. We're willing to pick up the dynamite and use it *because* we know its dangerous. Our approach to truth offers us hope for the creation of a movement that can harness the powers of religion without the delusional dogmas that traditionally have been used to justify the horrors often associated with religion.

There are plenty of people in the world who walk around proclaiming the truth who have no idea how dangerous this game is. Well, *we know*, and it is in the fullness of this knowledge that we may be able to handle dynamite safely.

Completely safe? Definitely not. We will screw up, we will veer down destructive paths, but as long as we keep the extreme danger in the center of our minds and beliefs, we can optimize the possibility that we won't accidentally point a loaded gun at the divine spirits we call humans, even if they happen to disagree with us and to believe things we know are wrong. Surely those who know how dangerous dynamite is can use it to clear a field, to build a tunnel with much less risk of injury. The danger of religion -- our fear of ideological belief systems which place themselves as superior above others -- lies at the core of Yoism, at the heart of every ritual, and in every Yoan practice.

Rather than refusing to tap into the only power that has ever changed human history, we must wield that power while continually challenging ourselves to remember the danger of the power we wield. Then, and only then, can we be a profound force for good in this world. A force capable of standing up against what we all know is wrong, standing against it with enough force to stop it.

While it might seem ironic or hypocritical for a Yoan to claim access to The Truth, there is no contradiction in our standing strong and screaming for all to hear, "We have the way! Follow us to a better world!" We need to stand just as strong as they stand or they'll trample all over us. We need to scream just as loud as they scream or we'll never be heard.

Many of us are afraid to do this. Make no mistake: this fear is warranted. Religion -- a community of individuals fanatically devoted to a certain set of ideals -- has historically been one of the most dangerous and destructive forces ever to exist. We all loathe racism, ethnic, and nationalistic conflicts, etc. So much of the world's problems are caused by our propensity



to splinter into ethnic and religious groups with the dogmatically proclaimed license to kill each other.

This fear is serious and legitimate. But there is more. We also fear losing ourselves to the glory of devotion and submission to a group, ideal, or idealized individual(s). No one wants to be brainwashed by baseless dogma and used to serve the ends of a few powerful individuals. Many of the most powerful religions on the planet which control our world (including Christianity, Islam, and even capitalist corporate ideology in certain forms) contribute directly and indirectly to the sort of suffering we see all over the planet. Nobody wants to be part of a delusional mob of lemmings which tramples everything its path on the way over the cliff.

Yoisim is the first religion in history whose community holds these fears at the center of their faith. We will always remember that our truths are never fixed. We will always honor the divinity of every human being. We will never persecute others because they do not believe what we believe.

With this, we have the freedom and the power to believe that we are right. Such belief comes with great and grave responsibility, and yet we must believe we are right if we are ever to have impact in this world. Our Truth is built on the direct word of God, on Reality as it is presented to us. Ours is a Truth that is not dogmatically accepted for all time but one that is forever being revised by what we learn from the Face of God Yosef.

We know our way is better than so many others. We wield truth. We must face up to our fear and have the courage to be righteous. We must speak our truth and inspire others. Dare we not?

## Chapter 4: Meaning

Our exploration of truth will only get us so far. Empirically justified truths are simply models for getting what we want most effectively, not for figuring out what it is that we want in the first place. Without our values -- our desires, our wishes for what we want from the world -- then our understanding of how the world works and how we can affect it effectively -- in other words, our understanding of truth -- is simply quite useless. The empirical method does not work for understanding and determining our values. Our process for determining our values, our ends, our desires -- our *meaning* -- does not conform at all to a set formula. However this exploration is no less central to Yoism -- encouraging and fostering a culture of deep introspection toward understanding our meaning is crucial to our vision of a large community empowered to change the world for the better. We can help each other explore our meaning together; we can encourage experimentation, we can share with each other the paths that work, and we can articulate our discoveries collectively.

### Who and what am I?

Who am I? What am I? What is this distinctive sense of self which guides my actions and my quest in this world? We each seem to have one, and for each of us it's different, guiding our actions toward different aims and goals. But what is this most fundamental concept of one's "self?"

Clearly, what we each consider to be the essence of our "selves" will vary tremendously from person to person. Many considerations of this question begin with contemplations of how our body relates to our "self." I am this head, this heart, these legs and these arms.

Our strengths are also often vital components of our sense of self. For instance, a world champion chess player may value his ability to play chess above all else, whereas a professional marathon runner may place tremendous value on the power of his legs and the endurance of his lungs. Our strengths are vital to how we define ourselves. Take our strengths away, and we feel broken, we feel useless.

Since humans are extremely social creatures, we often value about ourselves what people around us value about us, and our sense of self is often intertwined with the important relationships in our lives. This certainly is an important aspect of identity.

So then, in an examination of what constitutes the "self," let's begin to consider what happens when these vital components are stripped away. For example, imagine you lose your most important ability. Imagine you are the professional marathon runner and you lost your legs in a car crash. Clearly that could be a devastating blow to your happiness.

It would probably force you to rethink the path you have chosen for your life. In a sense, it would change your identity as it would be a difficult process of re-imagining how you define yourself. However, would *you* continue to exist? For most people, the answer is probably yes. You can probably cut away a fair amount of your body like this, and still feel something would remain that was identifiable as your "self." You would probably still feel you exist if you were to lose one or two of your senses, if you suddenly went deaf or blind. You would probably continue to exist even if you lost your dearest loved ones, as most of us eventually do.

Clearly the line we are drawing is not hard and fixed and is different for different people. A loss or change in any of these things will change the way we think about ourselves. Some people may be thrown into an identity crisis, in which they no longer have a sense of who they are. The runner who loses his legs would be forced to fashion a new sense of self that no longer included being a runner. But most of us would not feel, in such a situation, that we'd died; though such experiences may cause us to go through intense mourning, the "me" would continue to exist.

Contrast this with the notion of brain death. Imagine that your body is still perfectly healthy, but your brain -- with the exception of your brain stem that is necessary for basic bodily functions -- had died and you no longer had the awareness of experiencing anything: no feelings, no thought, no desires. Would *you* still be alive? This would be a very different question for most people, and the answer for many would probably be no.

This has even been legally defined as death in our culture -- pulling the plug on someone who is "brain dead" is not considered "killing a person," and in most states this is allowed because the *person* is already dead. Imagining such a situation, most of us would no longer consider our "Me" to exist, and certainly if one were actually in such a situation they would no longer *experience* the "me" to exist.<sup>2</sup> How does this "me" relate to our feelings, our thoughts, and our desires -- our meaning?

### What do you mean by "Meaning"?

We call it meaning, for lack of a better word, even though its use can be confusing. So let us try to be as clear as possible. By "meaning" we are not trying to specify the underlying cause of events. We are not trying to explain how some events lead to others. For instance someone may be faced with a confusing and upsetting set of experiences, and declare, "What is the meaning of this?" They may be asking "How did this happen?" "What caused this?" "Who is responsible?" Or, "Why did this happen (to me or someone else)?" This is not the sense in which we are using meaning here.

Rather when we say meaning we are referring to the *significance* of an event. Meaning is *what is important to us*. We are using it as a broad category for many of our personal feelings about the world: our feelings of right and wrong, our judgments of good and evil, of ugly and beautiful. Our aesthetic sense falls under the category of meaning, as does our moral sense. It

is partly a question of looking at what is important to us, what we desire. Such important things could include what is on our daily to-do list, as well as dreams of success, concern for our loved ones, and on to hopes for ourselves, our loved ones, and even for the future of our world.

We are talking about all the feelings we have about ourselves and the world which motivate us to do things. All those feelings which comprise our purpose and intention. In short, our *purpose or reason for living*. For many of us, this is what defines the essence of "Me." If you were to suffer a brain trauma that resulted in the loss of your meaning, you would lose your hopes and dreams. You would lose your loves, and your hates. You would be a purposeless lump of flesh, without desire, without feeling. It wouldn't matter if the thinking ("computing") higher parts of your brain remained functional. Even if you still had the ability to consider and experience, there would never be any reason to think, or for that matter to act on your thoughts, because you wouldn't want anything, you wouldn't *care*

In this sense, we -- our "selves" -- are bundles of motivations, intentionality and purpose. We *are* desire, and hope. Our selves are composed of our meanings.

We *are* meaning.

Viewed in this light, the *search* for meaning may be very different from how many people conceive of it. After all, if deep down inside of ourselves we *are* meaning, then a search for meaning is really an exploration of who we are. And yet ironically many people get caught up in worrying about what the "meaning" of life is, and they search for that meaning outside of themselves. They look to others to tell them where to find meaning, and how to look.

What most people never realize is that in a very real sense, they *are* the meaning of life.

That is, if they ever stopped to ask themselves, "What am I?" they would quickly discover that they are the source of the only known meaning and intentionality they will ever directly know. For some reason, people often feel that meaning needs to come from outside of them to be valid. Not only is this backwards, but the very idea, that meaning *can* come from outside of you is essentially meaningless.

Meaning is a personal feeling, something *your* being creates. It is something that happens within your consciousness. It is fundamentally something *inside of you*.

## The Exploration

Of course the process for coming to understand what is important for us as individuals is not simple. Each of us has different needs and desires in within very different lives. As we come to know our personal meanings, we realize that our knowledge of our own meaning is quite complex, always changing, and very much influenced by what is going on in the world outside of us. Furthermore, each of us has conflicting desires. To pursue some goals means we have to sacrifice others.

To truly understand our meaning -- how it changes, how various meanings interact with each other and influence each other -- we must explore the depths of who we are. This exploration is a lifelong process that none of us will complete. This deep personal exploration of meaning is the spiritual practice that underlies all of Yoism.

Religions are typically supposed to answer the question of meaning. Yoism, too, strives to help people with this question and much of what we do in Yoism is related the exploration of meaning. However, Yoism takes quite a different tack, and there are two major ways that Yoism diverges from the way traditional religions attempt to answer the question of meaning.

First, we distinguish this exploration of personal meaning from the exploration of reality.

This is not to say that how we feel is not part of reality, but rather that it is only part. Yoism has much to say about the exploration of reality, but here we are talking about only one corner of reality, and the best ways for exploring other aspects of reality tend to be quite different. For example, looking deeply into our own feelings will not answer questions about whether Jesus Christ at some point in the distant past really turned water into wine.

Nor will it answer questions about whether the sun moves around the earth or vice-versa. When we talk about our feelings, our meaning our purpose, we are NOT talking about factual statements -- we are not talking about facts and ideas that can be used to accurately predict our future experience of the world around us. Instead we are talking about descriptions of our internal state, which may or may not be predictive of future experiences. Meaning is about what we *want*, not about what *is* (except insofar as what we want makes reference to what is and our wants are a *part* of that which is). In Yoism this distinction is paramount because when we confuse what we want with what is, we often find it much more difficult to achieve what we want or, even worse, we act in ways that make what we really want harder to realize.

A simple example would be wanting to be able to fly. We could respond to this wish by believing that it enables us to fly. We then jump off a cliff believing we can fly and end forever the possibility that we will experience flight. Facing reality (i.e., gravity and the need to find a way that keeps us from falling) can make it possible for us to actually fly, for example, by creating airplanes. Another way to state this is that there is an important distinction between what we want, and how we can achieve what we want.

The traditional religions have tried to make truth claims about how our world works, about what the nature of reality is, based on nothing more than the whims and desires of a revered leader or other participants. For example, faced with the horror of death and our desperate wish to deny its finality, religions frequently claim that there is a realm, an afterlife, to which we go when we die. They present no evidence for this marvelous place except for the word of some revered holy man who suggested or told them about this invisible realm. And though the vast majority of holy men's versions of such a mystical, forever-ever land contradict any other individual holy man's claim, each claims to have *the* Truth, the *one* you should believe. And for the most part, most people do believe in such a magical forever realm, the one

they were told about when they were little. We *want* such a place to truly exist and so we believe what we were told because it comforts us; it is what we want to believe. Yoism diverges from this tradition.

Second, Yoans believe that a religion should not "tell" us what is important, for then it becomes dogma.

Many have turned away from the traditional religions because such dogma is often out of tune with their own personal experience. Rather than function as the arbiter of what is important -- the authority on what, where, and how we find meaning -- religion should be a guide, helping us on our way toward discovering our own meanings. We will find meaning in our own experience of the world, and religion should help us get in touch with -- be clear about -- what our experiences tell us is important.

As such, in Yoism there is no set formula for how one can investigate the questions about meanings and values. There are methods that have been practiced for centuries that people have found useful, and Yoism incorporates these methods to the extent that Yoans find them to be valuable. However, each person has a different path for this spiritual exploration (i.e., exploration of yo's spirit), and while many parts of the journey are likely to be similar, each person must be free to take and leave methods of exploration according to their usefulness to yo.

This is the widely encompassing nature of Yoism. In Yoism, the practice of personal spiritual exploration may include meditation, yoga, music, running, conversation, debate, philosophizing, studying people, nature, and the physical world, ski-diving, dance, chanting, observation, reflection and many other activities. This is an exploration of our own feelings and spirituality, and the exploration itself must be ours.

However, by recognizing the personal freedom people need in their search, Yoism does not simply abandon people to search alone. This is a journey we share, and often times the more we do share the journey with others, the clearer the way becomes. Thus we have made it part of our Yoan culture to gather and explore this space together (the specific ways in which the Yoan community does this currently will be described later in this chapter).

Additionally many parts of this chapter, and this book as well, can be viewed as a series of questions or propositions which Yoans have found useful in the examination of their own meaning. The process of self discovery is long and difficult. However, it is something that people have been doing throughout history and we do not need to start from scratch. Many of the questions that have been helpful for you to ask yourself in that journey will also likely be helpful for me. And many of the questions that have been helpful for our ancestors will likely be helpful to us; likewise for the answers that are found. This book, then, is a compilation of the best historical and traditional spiritual questions and proposed answers that we have found, as well as a compilation which is contemporary and continually evolving.

## Deep Importance

For most of us, the first step in this exploration is simply thinking and feeling. We start our exploration with the question, "What is important to me?" Perhaps we even come up with a list in our head of all the things we consider of deepest importance. Our initial list will be somewhat unsatisfactory. Some things will likely be on it because other people seem to find something important, or because we've been told by people in our lives that a certain thing is important. Some things on our list may be contrary to other things that are important to us and will make it necessary to seek some form of compromise; our list may be in a continual state of revision because perfect knowledge of what is most important to us may be impossible. And the list may change as our circumstances and understanding changes.

In this continual process, in addition to "what" we feel is important, it is essential to consider "why" we feel certain things are important. The "why" question helps us discover what is most deeply important to us and to resolve, to some degree, conflicts within our meanings. In other words, this helps to identify when we have made the mistake of coming to think about the means to our ends as ends in themselves.

For example, making money (a means) to support ourselves and our loved ones (an "end" result) may be very important to us. We may be able to make more money by cheating others. Yet, being honest in our dealings with others may be another end that is important to us. If we then come to think of making money as an important end in and of itself, then we may feel it is acceptable to cheat (a little or a lot, depending on the individual and the circumstances) and to compromise one end for another. We often experience this in dealing with certain situations in which the temptation to cheat becomes almost overwhelming -- when cheating is incredibly lucrative and the chances of getting caught are small or nil.

This is what motivates the massive stock/banking/bookkeeping fraud that has become so common. By using a little insider information, by cheating on the rules just a little, one can make hundreds of millions of dollars. Our honored leaders who we place in supreme positions of power are often the most guilty of such activity.

Continually distinguishing between our means and ends is part of the process of really exploring what is important to us. It involves paring down, imagining situations, examining how you feel in different contexts. For instance, someone may think to themselves that "All Life is Sacred." But what does such a proposition really mean?

Well first we need to examine what is meant by life. Does life mean all things that require oxygen, consume some form of organic fuel, and emit waste products? All reproducing things? By these definitions, fire could be considered alive. All things with DNA? Are viruses alive? DNA fragments? Lets suppose that our hypothetical person proposes that all organisms with metabolism are sacred. What does sacred mean? Does that mean we should never kill such organisms? Should we not eat plants? Animals?

Perhaps yo explains that sacred does not mean that you should not kill, but only that you should not kill frivolously. Or perhaps the person reconsiders and says all *animals* are sacred,



because yo doesn't actually feel badly when he eats plants, but does feel badly when he eats animals. But the distinction is pressed. What is the difference between a plant and an animal? Are amoebas more sacred than algae? No? Then how about multi-celled simple animals? Are jelly fish more sacred than seaweed? Perhaps, after deeply examining his feelings, he finds that what really troubles him is pain and suffering of sentient beings, regardless of whether they are "living" in some definitional sense. For instance, if one day we create super intelligent machines which are shown to have feelings but are not "alive" according to traditional definitions of life, he discovers that these are important to protect as well, whereas plankton, which apparently feels little or no pain, does not make him feel bad when it dies in his hair after a swim in the ocean.

So the first step is just thinking about what we find important, examining it, and imagining how we would feel in different circumstances. This is important, but it is only a first step. The most difficult questions in our life will not be so easy to answer. For this we need to go even deeper, to explore ourselves in a more fundamental way. Yoism embraces many traditions, and many methods of such exploration.

## Gatherings

Examples of these methods can be found in Yoan Gatherings. Similar to going to Church, Temple, or the Mosque in other religions, Yoans gather on a regular basis to share their sense of the sacred.

Adopted from experience in Quaker meetings<sup>3</sup>, a part of a Yoan Gathering is called the Hat Ceremony. In the Hat Ceremony, a "magic hat" is placed in the center of the group (any object the group cares to use will do). The group sits in contemplative silence until someone feels moved to pick up the Hat and do . . . something. Yo can sing, dance, talk, ask questions, ask the group to engage in experimental movement, whatever one is moved to do. The community then follows the lead of the person with the Hat who "leads" the Gathering while in possession of the Hat. (No one is *expected* to do anything, if they decide not to for whatever reason they may have.) When the person is done, yo replaces the hat and the group again sits in contemplative silence until someone is moved to take the Hat.

In the candle lighting ceremony, called "Joys and Concerns" (adopted from a similar ceremony found in some Unitarian services), members of the community who are so moved, light a candle representing a specific joy or concern that is currently on their mind. If so moved, they may share the joy or concern with the rest of the community.

The culture created by such ceremonies is diverse -- a sharing between sacred individuals. This in and of itself embodies much of what Yoism is all about: the truth that each of us brings to the community. Our individual truths are our experiences; the sharing of our truths is a sacred act. These ceremonies have proven an integral part of the process we have been describing. While sometimes nothing special happens, frequently someone will raise a topic or ask the group a question that leads to a deep, communal exploration of our meanings and values.

The ways in which this works can be quite varied. Recently, someone read some rather startling statistics on American consumption and the worldwide destruction of the environment. While this was not "news" to anyone, the author whose writing had been chosen expressed the problem in an eloquent, powerful way. A discussion ensued in which others explored their own understanding of the problem and their own participation in a community with so much wealth and consumption in a world with limited resources. In a completely different vein, during a Hat Ceremony, someone posed the question, "What do you do with your anger?" The ensuing discussion became a fairly deep exploration of how one deals with conflicts in life, especially with those we love. One member of the group noted how important and empowering anger can be in situations in which we need to act to defend ourselves or to express our own agendas. This discussion of how to harness anger effectively and not destructively became a meaningful experience for most of the people present. Such discussions, involving the expression of both ideas and feelings, have changed how individuals understand themselves and their relationships with others.

When Grant cries out in song, it is from his soul and his need to be loved and respected and heard by people he respects. When Emily shares a song she has written, it is from her soul, and her desire to be seen and admired and contribute to the group and honor what we do. When Dan shares his thoughts on philosophy, it is from his soul, and his need to share his long years of thinking and wrestling with complex intellectual problems, his desire to offer teachings that can be well received and inspiring to others who are tortured by similar questions. When Rob shares his knowledge of an event that might interest us or a book he is reading, it is his way of saying "Me too, I like what we are all about and I have something that I have found along the way to give to you all." When Rich reads from a book that has moved him, it is his way of asking if we understand, can we grok 'yo,' the big YO, the one we are all about. When Clydia reads a children's book, it is her way of linking her love for her daughter Sophie, for the earth and its sacred life. When Clara makes us get up and jump around, it is her soul reminding us to move, that we are more than just our thoughts, that our whole heart and body must be thrown into the game. When Zac shares with us his reflections on why Yoism is his life's dedication, it is his soul's plea that we might hear the importance of what he is saying and rise up to help in the construction of a better future, to work hard, and to even sacrifice. There are many people who contribute their piece to making the Gatherings come alive.

This then becomes a beautiful hodge-podge of sharing, all of us yearning to connect, to offer something of value, to be valued for the role we play. Some of us may be more timid than others. Certainly some of the things we do only one or two other people can relate to. But we take these risks and the mere act of trying is the sacred activity.

Gatherings then can become a place where we are invited to step out, to let down our guard, to risk the intimacy of human recognition, to be silly or stupid, or to be grandiose or wonderful. As the community watches with much loving patience, interest, and attention, even the most untalented act is transformed into one of divine beauty.

And there are surprises in such risk taking. Dan who thinks he cannot sing has written a song that is hauntingly powerful, especially because of the raw energy in his voice. Rob is so inspired by our music that he is going to help us record it -- from Gathering play to action, maybe even to a collection of Yoan Songs. In this way the Gatherings help us search deeper into our own souls to express our true meaning.

The Gatherings are one example of the many ways the people of the Yoan community support each other in the search for a deeper understanding of our meanings. The essential part of the journey is that one be actively engaged in it. It is crucial that we do not simply accept what society seems to tell us is important. Living in America today it is easy to believe that the acquisition of material wealth is the best path toward a "successful" life. Such a corporate philosophy of rampant consumerism increasingly dominates American culture and continues to infect more and more cultures around the world. This is not to say that consumption is bad, since obviously we have to consume, nor is it to say that markets are bad. Rather it is the placement of consumption and acquisition at the spiritual center of one's life which is devastating, not only to that person, but to everything around that person. It is when we substitute easy answers for a fully engaged search that we lose our way in life, and fall in the devastating traps of dogmatic and destructive philosophies.

## Community Agreements About What Is Important

At the core of the Yoan spiritual search is this foundational truism: Nobody can determine for me what is important to me. That is something that only I can determine. We reject the idea that another entity (be it another person, God, or something else entirely) can somehow determine what is meaningful for each of us as individuals.

It is true that many people never question the "truths" they were told when they were little. It is also true that many, many people cannot tolerate the confusion -- and often the alienation from loved ones -- of questioning those "truths" in order to find what is true for themselves. This is not the way of Yoism.

If Yoism offers you "something to believe in," there is nothing wrong with this, *as long as you have examined the beliefs of Yoism and determined that they are essentially similar to truths that make sense to you, that jibe with your personal experience.* If a Yoan has experiences that contradict Yoan beliefs (such as the following ideas presented in this chapter), it is their obligation to challenge such beliefs and help us to modify Yoism so that it coincides as closely as possible with our *collective* experience of the world.

For many of us, this Community of Truth is "something to believe in." Imagine a community that encourages you in your beliefs not because they are comforting or wish-fulfilling or because questioning them is frightening and even dangerous, but rather because, upon deep examination, your beliefs make sense to you.

As Yoans who are actively engaged in this process we have discovered that it has led us in common to some similar conclusions. Neither the articulation of these principles nor the principles themselves are written in stone. They are simply principles which we have each independently, in one way or another, discovered are profoundly important to us. As such they form the foundation for our involvement with each other as a community.

I want to live. I want to achieve happiness and fulfillment. To do so I need to be free to explore the world and to engage in activities and relationships according to my own choosing. I must be free to gather essential resources and to know that those resources will not be taken away from me arbitrarily. Similarly, I want to be safe from murder, and from other avoidable death. I want my life to be free from war, starvation, unhealthy living conditions, debilitating drug addictions, etc. I want to have adequate food, water, shelter, decent medical care. I want to feel good about myself, successful and respected. I want to have fun playing games, creating beautiful and functional things. I want to immerse myself in beautiful experiences of love, friendship, sex, eating, sleeping, being good to others, helping friends, etc. I want to be able to have a family. This is what I mean by freedom, and freedom is beautiful.

I want my family and loved ones to reach their happiness and fulfillment too, and thus they must be free as well.

I want this same freedom to be accorded to all other conscious and sentient beings, because I feel a connection to other beings who like me have hopes and dreams and aspirations, feel pain and happiness, and are aware of the world. To the extent that another being can feel and experience the way I do, I know that I want that being to be free to search for its own fulfillment, because I know the horrors of being constrained from doing so and the joys of being able to do so. I want to see more joy and love in the world, less suffering and hatred.

I recognize ALL humans born into this universe (regardless of race, nationality, culture, or sexual orientation) as being such conscious and sentient beings, because I can witness the expressions of their hopes and fear, pains and joys, and I feel a strong relationship (kinship) between their feelings and mine. Every human child must be given the chance to grow, thrive, be loved, and to explore their potential to the fullest extent possible.

Thus it also seems right to me that limitations on freedom should be placed on people to preserve the basic freedoms of others. This must be done more *fairly* than is currently occurring, as much as possible without favoring certain people or groups of people over others.

The natural world is beautiful, healing, and awe-inspiring. Each species of creature is a testament to the miraculous processes that shapes and brings order to our universe, and indeed has created our own consciousnesses. The mountains and streams, forests and creatures, the sun and the wind, provide me not simply with the essential ingredients of survival, but with many of the essential experiences of happiness.

I want to understand as much as I can about the universe and existence. The exploration of reality is a sacred activity. I yearn to understand more about myself, my purpose in this world, how it all came to be, what will bring me the greatest fulfillment, who I am, and what is in store for me. Genuine and sincere exploration underlies all my efforts of creative beauty. I value real understanding, hoping always to be moving closer to Truth.

We don't claim to know that these are universal principles. All we "know" is that when we've looked into our own souls we have found these to be essential. At the same time, we think there is strong evidence that any human being, when engaged sincerely in the process of getting to know themselves, will eventually reach similar conclusions. This is part of why we have begun the process of articulating these principles: we hope that we are sketching out the first lines of a new societal morality, one that is ultimately big enough not just for those who are already participating, but for every human being on earth.

## **The Process For Coming To These Articulations**

These articulations are crucial, as they form the basis for our community's existence.

However, meaning and ends are much more subjective than truth. So how do we decide what the community's stated goals are? So far, we are using the same process we use to decide what is true and real (what we believe). Yes, meanings are more subjective, but ultimately some sort of modified consensus process should work. Of course there will be many cases where someone's individual values conflict with the stated values of the group. How should those conflicts be dealt with? Again, perhaps a modified consensus process is applicable here.

For example, many issues will combine disagreements about both meaning and truth. The question of whether the Yoan community should support abortion is a question of ends and means, meaning and truth. Is protecting every *potential* human consciousness an end which the community considers important? Or does the community put a higher value on protecting the consciousnesses that currently exist? This is a question of meaning. When we look into our souls, what do we value more. On the other hand, when does consciousness begin? And does the community see value in the notion that using birth control or aborting a fetus is contradicting God's will? Is there a God who feels abortion is evil, and can values be derived from following the dictates of such a God? These are questions of truth.

Thus a complex question of abortion will have many facets worth considering for the community. Does that mean that the community cannot come to a decision on the issue? Not necessarily. In every important issue worth taking a stand on, there will probably be at least some irresolvable disagreements within our community. We are working to develop some sort of modified consensus that will allow the community to take action, while preserving the valuable disagreements that are unavoidable in a community which recognizes the worth of individual experience. If we do not create such a process then after our group grows past a trivial size, we will never be able to act.

Because Yoism is a non-dogmatic religion, there will be conflict and uncertainty in everything our community says and does. Our entire process is built around uncovering and resolving conflicts -- a process that makes cooperation possible in the context of conflicts that will never disappear. The aim of our modified consensus process is to air all the issues so they can be discussed and understood by our community and so that we can make sound decisions. Incorporating and accounting for disagreements is built into our decision making process itself.

## Chapter 5: Reclaiming GOD

### A Story of Creation

"God is the word that speaks itself."

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God, and the Word was, "Let there be light" and there was. And God saw to it that It was good. And It was. And as the Light exploded outward, time and space came into being.

According to Saint Stephen<sup>4</sup>:

If the density of the universe one second after the Big Bang had been greater by one part in a thousand billion, the universe would have re-collapsed after 10 years. On the other hand, if the density of the universe at that time had been less by the same amount, the universe would have been essentially empty since it was about 10 years old.

The Holy One, Praised be YO, saw to it that It was right and good. And It was.

Following the will of YO, the light condensed and coalesced according to the sacred formula discerned by Saint Albert,  $E=mc^2$ . In YO's hands, inconceivable quantities of pure energy were concentrated to create the stars and planets as matter, for the first time, had mass. Thus the heavens and the earth were formed. And matter obeyed the Will of YO as both energy and mass followed The Creator's dictates as we have best been able to understand them. We call the Holy One's commandments "forces" and label them the strong and weak, gravitational, and electromagnetic. And You, God, saw to it that It was good. And It was.

According to Your Laws as discerned by Saint Isaac, the hardened masses of solidified energy were tied for billions of years to orbits around the thermonuclear furnaces we call stars. Thus, the planets were bathed in a steady stream of radiation. The molecules of warmed matter began to interact as the sun's energy animated the lifeless rocks, mud, and water. Complex arrangements of atoms eventually formed that interacted with other such molecules to create mirror image double helix chains, copies of themselves as discerned by Saints Francis and James. Then following the Will of YO, as described by Saint Charles, the energized mud and water *evolved* into the myriad forms of life. The Latin word for "soul" is "anima," from which we get our word, "animate." The Hebrew words for "red earth" are "adm adamá." YO animated the red earth with *solar* energy; thus YO breathed a solar spirit into adm adamá or Adam. There may be many stars, others of which may have generated intelligent life. But there is only one sol, one sun. We could thus say, "The Holy One, Praised be Thee, O God, did give us Your only sun to bring forth our souls out of the lifeless clay."

As Saint Alan put it, the universe "peopled." Many people in reaction to the traditional religions that they were taught when they were children have rejected religion altogether and have come to the conclusion that there is no God; that we live in a Fully Automatic Universe. Thus, intelligent life according to this belief evolved through a series of accidents out of a stupid universe composed of mindless matter and blind forces. Modern ecologists, however, are beginning to see that this is not the way the universe works: Organisms require and imply environments and environments imply organisms. In Saint Alan's words:

we tend to think of this planet as a life infested rock which is as absurd as thinking of the human body as a cell-infested skeleton. [Yet, contrary to this absurd notion that is implied by the Fully Automatic Model] . . . we cannot escape the conclusion that the galaxy is intelligent. If we first see a tree in winter, we might assume that it is not a fruit-tree. But when we return in summer to find it covered with plums, we must exclaim, "Excuse me! You were a fruit-tree after all." Imagine, then, that . . . [five] billion years ago some beings from another part of the galaxy made a tour through the solar system in their flying saucer and found no life. They would dismiss it as "Just a bunch of old rocks!" But if they returned today, they would have to apologize: "Well you were peopling rocks after all!"

Yes, through the process of Natural Selection did YO, with an outstretched arm and a mighty hand bring forth man and woman out of sun warmed mud and water.

### Traditional Religion

Then many *terrible* things began to happen. Many people cannot bear to think about these horrible things. Others cannot believe that a world with such horrors could have been created by an Infinite God, and so they insist that God does not exist.

But, in fact, YO has seen to it that everything is the way it must be, even though horror is real.

You see, in order to create a peopling universe, God created gravity to hold the earth near the sun where it could be warmed. But that same gravity once caused a young boy to plunge to his death when he leaned over a cliff to break off a branch he was trying to gather for firewood. His friend's anguished cries for help brought others to the top of the cliff where they looked upon the boy's dead body, lying face down on the beach below them. What was the shaking, terrified friend going to tell the boy's mother, "Mrs. Jones, we know you thought we were only camping out, but Billy's dead. God's gravity killed him because he was gathering wood."

Why does God's Will not spare the innocent wood gatherers and punish the truly guilty? Here is where humans blaspheme against God. Rather than



seeing the miracle of creation and the holy wonder of YO's love that created a peopling universe, we see the pain inherent in that universe and angrily blame God for being an inadequate mommy or daddy. "Why did You not make the ground soft, O Lord? We don't like Your world of the strong and weak, the electromagnetic, and the gravitational. We want a *magical* world in which the falling are caught by the arms of a Superman from the planet Krypton, a world where evil ones are always punished and the good rewarded. *We want this so badly that we will pretend it is true.*"

And so we did. We created fairy tales, childhood fantasies, to give us comfort against the awful pain of catastrophe, disease, death, and evil. As Saint Sigmund described, we projected magical parents into the sky and pretended that some Man-God, Daddy-Mommy is watching over us, listening to our cries, and answering our prayers that beg for magical abrogation of the Will of YO as represented in YO's Laws themselves. Saint John was right: Such a God, "is a concept by which we measure our pain."

These magical fantasies angered God and led to the worst evil of all: Following these fantastic lies, the greatest horrors of all have been created. Human inhumanity always flows from the path of untruths, the path so often followed by all the childish, infantile lies told by other religions. These religions are the ones you know, the ones you call "religion." They are too often the work of misguided power mongers who use human ignorance and desperate hope to work their ends of power and glory.

## Enlightenment

Four hundred years ago, after eons of killing and ignorance, there was a revolution that offered hope that we could leave the Age of Darkness and enter the Enlightenment. Saint Francis outlined a way to study the universe and to know the mind and will of YO. He told us to forget received wisdom from authorities who use rigid systems of belief to enslave the human spirit. Rather, open your eyes and see, your ears to hear, all your senses to sensibility and leave the delusional world of religious dogma behind. Thus, we can come to know YO's will, mind, and creation as it truly is. Following Saint Francis and the enlightenment philosophers (the British empiricists, Saints John, David, and George), astounding leaps in understanding amazed the world. This was the path of Truth followed by Saints Isaac and Galileo. But the Church was frightened by their rejection of dogmatic doctrine. For if humans learned to think for themselves and to know God directly, then there would be no need for the Church. So, the Inquisition came to Galileo and threatened to slowly torture him to death if he did not recant and lie saying that the sun does go around the earth. Saint Galileo, by then an elderly man, acquiesced and in the face of torture and death acknowledged the greater wisdom of the Church. (350 years later, in 1993, the Church pardoned Galileo.)

But this type of hypocritical lunacy should not surprise us. This is, in fact, completely consistent with the actions of the Judeo-Christian-Muslim God Himself. Saint Friedrich mocked the hypocrisy of the Christian virtues of turning the other cheek, charity, and the notion that the meek will inherit the earth as if gentleness and love were, in reality, prime Christian virtues. He pointed out how these meek gentlefolk were told by the false saint, Thomas Aquinas, that one of the sweet benefits of going to heaven was that the virtuous would be able to listen to the screams of the wicked being tortured throughout all eternity. So much for "loving thy enemies" and "turning the other cheek." Or consider the Christian radio preacher whom we heard the other day exclaim that the Bible says that on the judgment day all will bend down before Jesus Christ, some willingly because of love of his appearance. Others will be brought to their knees by an iron rod that will break their legs. So the preacher pleaded: Submit willingly or have your legs broken. Either way you *will* submit.

Saint Bob captured this in his song,

God said to Abraham, "Kill me a son."  
Abe said, "God, you must be putting me on."  
God said, "No."  
Abe said, "What?"  
God said, "You can do what you want, Abe, but the next time you see me comin, you better run."  
Abe said, "Where you want this killin done?"  
God said, "Out on Highway 61."

Yes, amazingly, this does sound like a Mafia protection racket: Bow down to me or I'll break your legs. Or it can be seen as a version of the other nonsensical, infantile demand of the false god of other religions: Love me freely and with your whole heart or I'll break your body and dance on your windpipe.

Saint James (Loewen) noted that Judeo-Christian descriptions of other religions tend to be highly patronizing. For example, he quoted one U.S. history text that said:

These Native Americans believed that nature was filled with spirits. Each form of life, such as plants and animals, had a spirit. Earth and air held spirits too. People were never alone. They shared their lives with the spirits of nature.

[The textbook] was trying to show respect for Native American religion, but it doesn't work. Stated flatly like this, the beliefs . . . [do not seem] like the sophisticated theology of a higher civilization. Let us try a similarly succinct summary of the beliefs of many Christians today.

These Americans believed that one great male god ruled the world. Sometimes they divided him into three parts, which they called father, son and holy ghost. They ate crackers and wine or grape juice, believing that they were eating the son's body and drinking his blood. If they believed strongly enough, they would live on forever after they died.

Yet the false, Pretend-Daddy-In-The-Sky worshipers with such amazingly infantile religious notions stole God from the empiricists. As one by one the empiricists' holy study of the divine body of YO, the Universe, revealed the silliness in the beliefs of the childish religions that ruled the world, the religions rose up against the scientists and a barrier was imposed between those that studied the material world and those that studied God. Yes, there is a barrier in that those that study the real world are studying the one True God, for YO is Truth. *Reality* is the Holy One who commands our allegiance, while those that study what is *typically* called religion are living in a fantasy land. The shame is that they STOLE GOD FROM US and made the study of God the study of the make believe. They convinced thinking people that God and the material world are alien and separate, and that the study of material reality has nothing to do with the higher truths. As if the study of imaginary fantasies can lead one to any truth at all!

Accepting the definition of the childish, parental daddy-god worshipers, thinking people have left the field and proclaimed themselves to be atheists (or agnostics). How bizarre, O God, that thinking people should deny Your existence, You whose existence they believe in more devoutly than the pseudo-religious deluded ones believe in their fantasy god. Some of you may wonder how we can make such a claim that atheists are the most devout believers in the One True God so we will tell you. we will tell you why it is an unquestionable fact that YO exists. Then, we want to tell you something about your relationship to YO. We will start with a story that was first told to me by my 12 year old nephew.

Once there was a man called Oscar, the Devout. Oscar had difficulty walking, so he remained sitting in his house when flooding rains began to bring water into his living room. His brother, who was evacuating his own family from the flood, stopped by to help Oscar. His brother had come along with his tiny boat into which his family was crowded. He begged Oscar to get in. But, no, Oscar would not leave. Oscar said that he had always believed in *God* and that he was not going to stop believing now; *God* would save him. *His* life was in *God's* hands. As the water got deeper, and Oscar continued to refuse, his brother reluctantly left.

Hours later, Oscar had struggled to the second floor of his house as darkness fell and the rains continued. A rescue squad of neighbors was checking for lost stragglers. They came by in a powerful speedboat with searchlights. Spotting Oscar, they pulled up to his second story window and yelled over the wind, rain, and motor of the boat for Oscar to get in. Oscar refused, repeating his faith in God and how God would save him.

Several hours later, Oscar was found by a National Guard helicopter as he sat on the peak of his roof, deep in prayer. Over a loudspeaker the pilot shouted for Oscar to place the lowered harness around him so they could lift him to safety. Oscar refused, for his faith was in God. A few hours later Oscar drowned. He went to heaven, for he was a good man who had put his faith in God. Brought before God, he was welcomed to heaven.

Oscar had one question to ask of God. "God," he said, "I refused to place trust in anything but You. we know that maybe my time had come, but God we are confused. Why did YOU not save me when we had believed *only* in You?"

In a deep and powerful voice God began to answer, "Schmuck, we sent you two boats and a helicopter.."

Like Oscar, religions as you know them, have misguided notions about God. Their god is often presented as a father-like figure, in some cases like a wise old king with white hair and a long flowing white beard, sitting in the heavens on a golden throne, surrounded by angels, ruling the universe, listening to our prayers, and magically intervening in our behalf.

Yet, you will also find in Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and virtually all other religions, those who believe in a very different conception of God. In this other conception, God will still be the all powerful ultimate force or creator, yet God will bear no resemblance to human beings. God in these conceptions is the Ultimate Almighty One, the Ultimate *Unknowable* Essence that in the infinite magnitude of Holy Existence is *beyond* the conception and imagination of the finite human mind. God is the Unknowable Creator who brings (or brought) the universe into being out of nothing, or caused it to exist from the beginning of time without creation. And again, it is the atheists and agnostics in this world who are the strongest *believers* in the God we have just described. It is those who believe in the material world without divinity, who have the strongest *faith* in the God we have described. Let us explain how can this can be.

## The Nature of God

This is an attempt to give you a sense of God's presence here and now, in the room in which you are sitting. we will approach the conclusion from several directions. But this is hard to follow and will require you paying close attention. we are specifically trying to show how we can take back God and religion from those who have used lies and deceptions to appropriate them as their own.

A professor once asked his class what an electron is. No one could come up with a meaningful and serious answer. Is it a round marble with a minus sign inside it? We can measure its charge or its mass, but we have just as hard a time saying what we mean by a word such as "charge." So, what *is* it really? *That* was his point: We use models to talk about the essence of the physical universe, for example, electrons spinning in an orbit around a nucleus of

protons and neutrons. But these are only metaphors we use to enable our brains to have some intuitive sense of the essence that is not directly knowable. Even the greatest scientists can not begin to say what the underlying essence is of the phenomena we refer to with words such as protons, neutrons, atoms, photons, the strong and the weak nuclear forces, etc. Yet, we use words/models in which we talk of an underlying fabric of the universe that is composed of these basic particles, forces, and arrangements of matter.

As Saints John, David, and George showed us, the only world that we can know to exist, or even say anything about, is the world of our experience. So what exists outside of our experience can only be described metaphorically and can never be known. If we held up a red rose, we all would agree that it is red. That is, we all utter the word, "red" to refer to the sensation of color that we experience when we look at it. But we know that human nervous systems vary. It is quite likely that some of you may have the experience that we know as "red-orange" or "orange" (or, if you're color blind, what we experience as blue or green). But, because we all call the rose "red" when we experience its particular hue, we have no problem communicating and we all agree that it is "red."

But if each of us experience something different (ranging from what we experience as red, orange, all the way to green) where and what is the "red?" Is it in the rose? Or is the red a creation in the mind of the beholder? Imagine what the world would look like if our eyes had evolved to be sensitive to x-rays, infrared, or radio waves, all simply different wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation. There would be no red, greens, or blues but the physical world would still have attributes. The point is that the attributes, like the red of the rose, don't exist "out there." What is it then that exists as an aspect of the rose prior to perception? This prior to perception world, that exists independent from any observer, that does not vary depending on who examines it, *cannot be known*. Yet, though we cannot know what it is or even begin to describe it in an intuitively meaningful way, we know that *something* exists independent of our perceptions. There are mistaken perceptions and delusions. That is, there are beliefs that do not jibe with what is "truly out there" that ultimately gives rise to our perceptions.

If what can be known is only what is experienced, then experience brings the known world into existence. Even though something *unknowable* exists beyond experience, the *known* world is created by experience, brought into being by the very act of perception. Consider, as Saint Alan did, a rainbow. He said:

A rainbow exists only when there is a certain triangular relationship between three components: the sun, moisture in the atmosphere, and an observer. If all three are present, and if the angular relationship between them is correct, then, and then only, will there be the phenomenon "rainbow." Diaphanous as it may be, a rainbow is no subjective hallucination. It can be verified by any number of observers, though each will see it in a slightly different position ... The point is, then, that an observer in the proper position is as necessary for the manifestation of a rainbow as the other two components, the sun and the moisture. Of course, one could say that *if* the sun and a body of moisture were in the right relationship, say, over the ocean, any observer on a ship that sailed into line with them *would* see a rainbow. But one could also say that if an observer and the sun were correctly aligned there would be a rainbow *if* there were moisture in the air!

Somehow the first set of conditions [the sun and moisture over the ocean] seems to preserve the reality of the rainbow apart from the observer. But the second set [the observer and sun with no moisture], by eliminating a good, solid "external reality," seems to make it an indisputable fact that, under such conditions, there is no rainbow. The reason is that it supports our ... mythology to assert that things exist on their own, whether there is an observer or not. It supports the fantasy that man is not really involved in the world, that he makes no real difference to it, and that he can observe reality ... without [influencing or creating] it ...

Perhaps we can accept this reasoning without too much struggle when it concerns things like rainbows ... whose reality status was never too high [to begin with]. But what if it dawns on us that our perception of rocks, mountains and stars is a situation of just the same kind? ... We [are] simply ... saying only that creatures with brains are an *integral* feature of the pattern which also includes the solid earth and the stars, and that without this integral feature ... the whole cosmos would be as unmanifested as a rainbow without droplets in the sky, or without an observer. [This notion] makes us feel insecure because it unsettles a familiar image of the world in which rocks, above all, are symbols of hard, unshakable reality, and the Eternal Rock a metaphor for God himself. [This] mythology ... had reduced man to an utterly unimportant little germ in an unimaginably vast and enduring universe. It is just too much of a shock, too fast a switch, to recognize that this little germ with its fabulous brain is evoking the whole thing, including the nebulae millions of light-years away.

This does not force us to the absurd conclusion that before there were life forms there was no universe. The point is that we know there is a universe with rocks, mountains, chairs, helicopters, and people, with an underlying fabric consisting of atoms, protons, electrons, electromagnetic forces, etc.

While we can describe this fabric using mathematical formulas, we can see in our total failure to answer my teacher's question about electrons, and in the examples of the red rose and rainbows this, that this fabric is in its essence unknowable. All we can know is the human experience that comes into being when the human nervous system interacts with this unknowable essence, an unknowable essence that even the most doubting among us takes on faith to exist; for few atheists would argue that protons, electrons, atoms, and molecules don't exist even though no one can say what they are, what they are made of.

What we sense is not "the-thing-that-is-out-there." There are no red, soft-petaled, flowers with green stems with hard sharp pointy things "out there." Those words refer to the *perception*. If this is so, there are no roses, no tables, no chairs, no people without a nervous system to perceive them all. There is something. But that something can't be known by us. Let us call it the-thing-in-itself, the a priori-unperceived-substance, or for short, the unknowable essence.

One of the following statements about this unknowable essence *must* be true. You can choose whichever suits you for they all lead to God. 1) The unknowable essence was created by a creator or creative force, in which case there is a God and we need go no further; or 2) it came into being by itself; or 3) it has existed throughout all time without creation. If there is no creator or outside creative force (Option #2), the atheist is forced to assume that this unknowable essence of the universe either created itself, or, it has existed through all time. In either case (Options 2 or 3), the atheist, who insists on believing only in the material world, is left believing in *an infinite, unknowable essence that created itself, or, has existed through all time without creation, and out of which springs all that exists*. To repeat: The materialist/atheist believes in an *Infinite Unknowable Essence that caused Itself to come into being, or, an Infinite Unknowable Essence that has existed throughout all time without creation. In either case, out of this Infinite, Unknowable Essence all that exists comes into being*. we really can't think of a better way to define God (!): An independently existing, uncreated Infinite Unknowable Essence that gives rise to all that we experience. This is another way of expressing what the great mystic Saint Johannes said hundreds and hundreds of years ago in his statement with which we began tonight, "God is the word that speaks itself."

In this conception it is the deluded religionist, the one who creates idols and childish myths and places them before You, O God, who is the unbeliever. It is the typical religious one who is "the one of little faith." The scientists, who in devout worshipful study examine the essence of the universe trying to create better metaphors to enable us to grasp the structure and form of the Unknowable Essence, these scientists are the high priests, the true saints of the One True Religion. For in studying and attempting to comprehend the manifestations of the Infinite Unknowable Essence from which all existence arises, they are, in effect, studying the Almighty One; they are immersed in the study of the Body and Mind of YO.

There are two ways to know YO. One is YO, the Other, outside of yourself. The other way is YO as you, as your True Self. We become aware of YO, the Other, by focusing on the infiniteness of creation and the feebleness of our brains when it comes to encompassing the paradoxes of the universe. We become aware of the great Other/God, when we stand naked and small and contemplate our finite, fleeting existence in the vast, eternal cosmos. When you feel the fragility of your body and the aloneness of your egoistic existence, you feel an anxious need, a yearning, a hunger for the great idealized God/Other. When you open your senses with awe and wonder, God the Other will speak to you. For by the manifestation of Godself as reality, YO presents the empirical fact of YO's existence. If you seek guidance and meaning, they too can be found by listening to the teachings of Reality.

But you begin to become aware of YO as your True Self, when you focus on Saint Alan's words: *Your* brain is evoking it all. Or as we put it, YO evolved YOself out of the energized mud so that YO could shape YOself into your form, into you. Yes, the Universe is one onanistic, orgasmic Big Bang. God, the Universal Field is playing with Itself. First, matter condensed and smashed together in cosmic explosions as YO danced the Thermonuclear Tango with YOself. Then as things settled down a bit into the form of stable orbits of heavenly bodies, the galaxies, stars, and planets spun and swung around each other as the Infinite One danced the Gravitational Fantastic. Then YO decided to come alive and lovingly evolved matter with nervous systems so that the Godhead could gaze upon Itself. Sensitivities to color, sound, touch, smell, and taste were added to delight the senses of the evolving Godforms. But without the nervous systems to see and sense, the universe would be as unmanifested as a rainbow without droplets. Ivory Snow used to brag that it was "99 and 44/100 percent pure." Well you are "100% pure God." You are the point. You are evoking it all. You are YO gazing upon YOself and thus bringing the universe (as you know it) into existence.

### **Reclaiming Your Godliness**

Jesus was right. And he was killed for it. He realized he was the Son of God, flesh of Godflesh, no less. But his followers got it all wrong. They, like those who persecuted Jesus, took his message and misunderstood it as a grandiose claim that he was the God-on-the-throne, The Ultimate, Almighty



One whose will rules every action of the universe. Those who invoked his name used this misunderstanding to enslave others, to make them feel small, by claiming that only by bowing before Them (as the *True* Messengers of Jesus Christ) could they become the beloved of God. Focusing on one form of the two ways to know God, they tried (quite successfully) to deceive others into believing that only by giving power and prestige to the elite of the church could you come into the good graces of The Almighty, the Infinite Other. Yet we declare unto you, *You* are the true child of YO. It is time to wake up realize the true message that Jesus preached and take full possession of, time to own, your birthright!

You, God, told us what You wanted. You gave us senses to feel (see, smell, hear, and taste) Your created intelligent minds to comprehend it, and hearts to feel what is right. If we ignore what You have shown us, if we ignore the instructions You wrote into our hearts through millions of years of evolutionary shaping, then we must suffer the consequences. We ignore You and Your Truths at our own peril.

What blocks our ability to use our hearts and minds to see the Truth? The answer is clear: The Devil that leads us to ignorance, the Satan that tempts us toward greed, is our desperate need to deny painful truths, our use of magical thinking, our wishes to avoid responsibility, laziness in the face of hard work, and the pursuit of short term, petty pleasures. We do all this while ignoring YO's dire warnings about the price that must be paid for such short term greed and stupidity. Thus we desperately cling to the fiction that evil will be punished in some magical realm we call the afterlife; that we have no real impact in the world; that, if we pray hard enough, the "Lord will [in fact] buy me a Mercedes Benz"; that we can ignore the environmental consequences of our SUV's and our consumption of fifteen mouthfuls of vegetable protein in every bite of meat. That in the industrialized world, 20% of humanity can consume 80% of the world's production and defecate 80% of the world's pollution while the masses of humanity go hungry and the population doubles every 38 years. Yes, in 2020, in less time than it will take for most of today's toddlers to graduate from college, our present population of 6 billion will reach 8 - 9 billion. The *increase* alone of almost three billion over the next 20 years is greater than the number of people on the planet when we was born (in 1951, there were about 2.5 billion people)!

How do we plan to cope with the horror that is being generated by our ignorant refusals to face what we are doing? The answer is, we don't. This is what God will punish, for as Saint Mohandas said, "God is Truth." When we ignore Reality, we ignore Truth. When we ignore Truth, we ignore God. When you sit on the train tracks sipping tea as the horn sounds indicating that the high speed express is coming, thou ignorest God, and verily, we say, thou shalt be punished!

Such magical thinking is the province of many who follow the other religions. They ignore You, O God, Your creation and essence. They refuse to use their YO given minds and ability to think and feel clearly. They refuse to listen to You and instead listen to childish fairy tales about one they give Your stolen name to. Then they claim special relationships with You in order to enslave others. They butcher one another in Your name, O God. They claim holy reasons for destroying the life sustaining fabric of Your creation.

Arrogant evil is assuming that we can ignore what You, O God, have told and repeatedly tell and present to us. The childish, magic worshipers ignore Your warnings. Global warming is a left wing/environmentalist myth. Overpopulation is of no concern states the Catholic Church as they declare that the earth can support 40 billion people. They blasphemously claim they receive their heinous pseudo-wisdom directly from You. But as Saint Paul (Ehrlich) questioned, even if this were so, "is there any purpose served in converting the planet earth into a gigantic feed lot." New communicable and virulent diseases will inevitably evolve as their breeding ground goes from millions of human organisms to billions upon billions. And it is doubtful that the next time, the bigoted, small-minded, religious right will be able to claim the new disease is being visited upon the homosexuals as punishment for their sins. The ignorant purveyors of the false, childish religions insist that their magical thinking makes it unnecessary to heed the Word of YO as unmistakably written into the very fabric of the universe.

Yet, not only will the ignorant and greedy suffer, they will bring great suffering down on all of us. Help us, O God, to find the strength and the *community* to fight their hideous evil. We urgently need to use our intelligence to look at ourselves squarely, face reality, and acknowledge who we are. Yet, God, You "designed" us through Natural Selection to *not* see ourselves clearly. Up until recently, those hominids that were designed to form nationalistic, ethnic, and religious illusions for the purposes of maintaining divisions for the sake of promoting and protecting *their* group were the ones that survived and reproduced best. Now this previously adaptive, murderous strategy threatens us with destruction. *If* we can use our capacity for wisdom and overcome or redirect this propensity, our species may survive. If not, our survival is doubtful. And even if we survive as a species, if we don't get control of our tendency to splinter into ethnic, infantile religious groups, the most ugly parts of our history will be repeated. With our new technologies, understandings, and powerful mastery of the matter and forces that compose the physical world, repetitive fractious, destructive patterns will occur that will make all previous human suffering pale by comparison. We will not only be doomed to repeat our history, but we will reach new, inconceivable heights of horror.

Yet, God, as we reach the end of this chapter we proclaim that You, in Your infinite wisdom, saw to it that we would have a chance; that consistent with

the Laws of the Universe as You have willed them, there would be a way out, a solution. In addition to being an ethnocentric, at times murderous species, we are also remarkably cooperative. Despite the often grossly inequitable distribution of resources, we have also shown an enormous amount of self-control and mutual care *for members of our own group*. Help us, O God, to use the Truths You have shown us to see that our species is now one group, the Tribe of Humanity. As Saint Buckminster noted, we are all living on Spaceship Earth. From now on, we are all in the same boat. If our fractious, greedy, genocidal quarreling that may have been adaptive to the winners in the past does not cease, the boat will sink. You, O God, did not spend 15 billion years creating and shaping a peopling universe only to allow the stupid, greedy, ignorant, and deluded among us to destroy Your creation.

I know that prayer is an attempt to abrogate responsibility, an attempt to ask You, God, to magically solve our problems. So lest we be accused of the blasphemy of prayer, let it be clear that my prayer to You, O God, is a plea being made to Your manifestation holding this book. Reading these words sits the animated, evolved form into which You have shaped Yourself, O God, and to whom we make my plea. Let Us take responsibility and face our Godhood! It is we who have the power to shape our planet earth. Let us not abrogate our responsibility for, if we do, rest assured that the infantile, magic worshipers will step into the breach and finish the destruction of our world. Overpopulation, disease, and fractious religious superstitions threaten us with the cataclysmic destruction of billions and possibly the end of our species. We are in grave danger and we must unite to fight the evil of human delusion.

You never enjoy the world aright  
Till the sea itself floweth  
In your veins  
Till you are clothed  
With the heavens  
And crowned with the stars.<sup>5</sup>

## Chapter 6: Why Me? Why Yoism?

### A Declaration of Inter-Dependence

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for a people to advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained, and to assume among the powers of the earth the equal and independent station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the change

We hold these truths to be sacred and self-evident: that all people are created equal and independent; that from that equal creation they derive in rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We hold these truths to be sacred, yet as we pollute our rivers, raze the wild forests and destroy our future, they are defiled. We hold these truths to be undeniable, yet as our governments serve only the rich they are denied. We hold these truths to be self-evident, yet as our families and communities are torn apart, they are ignored. We hold these truths, and no longer are we willing to let them be passed by.

There is the moment in the progression of the soul and in the struggle for personal improvement, when the individual realizes that they are intimately connected to the entirety of the universe. At this moment the following phrase loses all triteness and becomes a haunting curse, "No one is free while others are oppressed." Those of us who hear the truth of this as a burden are caught in the knowledge that to take one more step forward in the journey of self progression the whole world must step with us.

The world is full of needless suffering. Other religions teach that suffering is part of life, that we can't avoid it. Definitely, suffering is part of life. Definitely, tragedy is a part of life. But the realization of Yoism is that so much of this suffering is needless. We can't change human nature, we can't deny suffering, we can't stop death. But we can organize in different ways, we can change our institutions. These are human creations, and surely as we have built them, we can rebuild them. We can change the way we live together, we can change the way we work, we can change the way we live. Ethnic tribal battles all over the world continue to tear more and more lives into pieces. For all of our scientific discoveries and brilliant technological advancements, we haven't learned anything. We haven't learned the power of our own shared humanity.

Why must people toil at work that is harmful to the earth, to their psyches, and to the health of all? We have the resources and the know-how to feed the world, can't we do this without all the suffering and killing, the exploitation, the slavery? What sort of luxury is it to be chained to a desk in a suit and tie, while the yacht sits idle in the polluted waters of the bay next to a dying city? What type of power is it to flush your planet down the drain and piss on your children's future?

A different world is possible. Yet what stops everyone from making it happen? Who's job is it to break free of our routines, to take the risks of pursuing the dreams in our hearts? Be realistic we are told -- but what exactly does that mean in a world where Global Warming is a scientific certainty ignored by our leaders? Who's job is it to believe in our own grandiose aspirations, to speak them allowed every day, to rise in the morning with our hearts beating faster as we know it could all be real? It really could.

The first trick is to stop dreaming alone. What is this nonsense that you have to figure out what to do with your life on your own? Since when do you alone have the power to change the world? But together we have power undreamt of -- if we could share our dreams we could achieve them together.

This is why we Gather. We Gather so that we can heal our senses, so that we can breathe deep the companionship of others, and escape our numbness -- to feel pain, to feel vulnerable, is to feel hope, is to begin to open ourselves to the possibility that we are the ones responsible for making our most sacred and precious dreams come true.

The first step, the very first step, is to re-learn community. To re-learn how we can come together, share rituals, struggle through our conflicts, love and fight with each other in a way that is deep and meaningful. The difficulty as always is the food, the warmth, the war. How will we defend ourselves? These problems can all be overcome. This is the first step, to join together again, to once again be truly larger than our small selves, to in this joining find the feeling of liberation, to feel the freedom of being protected by a loving community.

Though religion has been successful at bringing truly loving communities together, so many have failed. So many religions have been the cause of endless, innumerable wars. Conventional religions have so many of the right pieces, but in their mindless insistence on one 'right path,' and an inflexible attitude towards dissenters, religions have failed to be powerful unifying forces for all of humanity. On the other hand, religions which have barely any message beyond tolerance have been unable to gather the momentum needed to truly reform society beyond tiny band-aid solutions.

What is needed is some way of combining the power of cohesion that a religion creates with the freedom of thought of the individuals. What is needed is a way to gracefully acknowledge our diversity and our individuality in a framework where we can work together to create a society where we will all be loved..

But why Yoism? Why not one of the hundreds or thousands of other religions or unions that has come before? Why will Yoism work when the world is littered with great failures? Well, we don't know it will work. But we believe it is something that truly has not been tried before. It's an experiment of hope.

Hopefully in reading this book, you have come to understand the ways in which Yoism hopes to succeed where other belief systems have failed. Other institutions make all kinds of promises about what it is they will help you engage. Judaism the engagement with the Torah. Christianity with the New Testament. Islam the engagement with the Quran. Yoism offers the promise of engagement with your own experience of the world.

Yoism is the ultimate pragmatic point of view: we will do whatever is needed and whatever works in order to be able to engage with love more and more of the world. There is no Yoan allegiance to scriptures or dogma. Explicitly Yoism embraces a dynamism and a mutability where dogma is abandoned in favor of pragma. We even made up the word pragma to rhyme. In this mutability, the conflicts which naturally result are acknowledged and dealt with head on. In pursuit of pragmatic ends, fairness of process and transparency of results are very strongly held beliefs. Yet, if either could be conclusively shown to have negative consequences, and a different methodology would result in more loving organized engagement, either of them would be abandoned. In this sense, Yoism is the ultimate pragmatic religion.

Yoism has gone through five different names in nearly five years. In another two years it will probably have a different name. All of the changing and twisting is there because we're continually changing and twisting. Ultimately what we think and believe is only important insofar as it helps us effectively organize, heal, love and find meaning. As such, we're incredible plagiarists -- we steal ideas from everyone. Everyone is a teacher, everyone is a guru.

Thus we must be willing to encounter a diversity of experiences, experiences that challenge us to reexamine our own sense of truth and righteousness. We need diversity of all types, of religion, gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, age, background, intellect, etc. The fundamental faith that propels the open source truth project of Yoism is that each human experience of life has valuable insight to be shared, and that this sharing propels us all closer to truth. This means we have to be ready to engage our fixed assumptions, reexamine them, and give up our "safety blankets" in the face of new evidence and experiences. Yoism proclaims no fixed dogma, just a constant process of refinement.

To this end we offer a call, and many invitations to the "others" and the "not me's" of the world, a call to engage and join the movement. We recognize that we need to develop a process that maintains room for diversity, that continually challenges orthodoxy and stagnant power hierarchies, and yet allows our community to function efficiently and effectively and meet our collective needs. This challenge is the paradox of Yoism, the tension between my needs and yours, between the need of the individual and the needs of the community. We must empower each of us in the pursuit of our own dreams, and these dreams must overlap enough to give back to the community so that we may continue to empower each other and growing number of Yoans.

How we do this is an evolutionary process, part foresight, part "we-will-cross-that-bridge-when-we-come-to-it." Ultimately our process must be able to contain the full expression of human diversity, the ultimate and true liberation of every soul, to free ourselves to be ourselves. The music created in this process is yonity, not unity.

Thus while we maintain the necessity of diversity, we recognize that only by our organizing can we effectively heal the world. Acts in the dark by silent actors can never respond to the depth of suffering in the world. So much of our suffering is caused by organizations which draw lines in the sand and maintain their castles at all costs. As a basis for action we as a community have to hold similar understandings of very basic concepts, and to agree on some method for coming to agreements about the world. This book has talked about God, love, truth, meaning, soul, and has laid out foundations for common understandings of each of these.

In particular, our definition of truth suggests a path on how to come to collective understandings about the world which will form the basis for our actions. This path seeks truth which is not contained in any scripture, nor in any one divine person, but rather truth is contained in the world itself.

To engage with Yoism, you don't have to believe a guru. In fact, you can't just believe a guru. There's no one mystical wise man with all of the answers. Instead, all of us are mystical wise men with all of the answers. This rejection of fantasies about some super-being who can levitate or walk on water or part the ocean, or be free from all suffering is tremendously scary. There is no supernatural truth. There is only the supremely amazing natural truth. And that's terrifying. Yet at the same time, it's liberating. You are God.

We must start the journey now, we must begin the work today, we must not let the horrors of the world take us by surprise, we must meet them with organized concern, we must learn ahead of time how to heal each other, to treat our wounds, to support our hope and encourage our spirits. We shall learn to sing songs that increase our resolve, help us remember that persistence is the hallmark of survival. We will not collapse into the old ways of violence, we will not forget the future that is ours once we make it to the other side.

We are the natural way, the true way, the community of compassion that quests after truth, that allows all individuals to express their inner piece of light, the human soul, to flourish in harmony with others. To create a multi-colored jamboree of celebratory improvisation -- in other words, to live Life.

To welcome our children to the beauty of the land, to teach them to protect it, to love it, to save it, to share it. To show our children a new world, a real world of dreams manifest. It is the only mission. One day YO will be real upon the world, YO will awaken and know yoself, will see yo dancing and singing, will smile upon Yo, will finally achieve a powerful bliss that hugs the world like a smile.

By reading this book you have started your engagement with Yoism. Join us even further. Think over the ideas we have presented. Start thinking about them and talking about them with the loved ones in your life. Start trying to find out what your core beliefs are, start questioning the institutions you're a part of. Don't believe anything in here just because it's in here. Engage it, question it. Engage us, question us. As you start engaging with us, as you start talking with us, then you become part of Yoism.

Set aside the fear of believing in your own potential, and add your song to the growing song of Yoism. Become the vision of yourself that you have locked away, risk the possibility that you truly are great. We'll harness our collective energies, and do something humanity has never seen before.

---

#### Footnotes

1Of course there are some complications to this view, for instance, the ultimate evolutionary



objective is not survival but reproduction, sometimes the survival of an organism is not important after it reproduces, and so it simply dies. Some fish for instance die in the thousands on their spawning ground. Similarly, a mother may choose to sacrifice her life to protect her children. But the point remains, that humans are \*deeply\* concerned with not dying.

2 Despite those who report "near death experiences," the vast majority of people who experience a coma have no memories of being comatose. And those who wake from comas could easily be reporting dreams they were having as they were "waking up." In dreams, our time sense is often distorted and a 15 minute dream can seem to be about the last 15 years. Thus, there is no reason to believe that the unusual and rare "near death experiences" that have been reported are evidence of anything more than dreamlike activity. And keep in mind that, in the current discussion, we are talking about the "brain dead," i.e., people whose brains show no sign of higher functioning like dreaming. Even when people are kept alive indefinitely in such a state, only in the rarest of circumstances do these judgments turn out to be misdiagnoses of actually comatose individuals who do eventually "wake up."

3 One core Yoan idea is to adopt some of the best parts of community experiences that have been developed by other groups and to adapt them to Yoan Gatherings

4 In this chapter, there are references to "saints." In Yoism, a saint is not an especially moral or well-behaved person. Rather a saint is a person who has helped us to see God more clearly or to be able to perceive and enjoy the beauty of the universe more fully. Most of you will recognize many of the saints from their first names. Others only some of you will recognize by name. That's OK. Their last names are not secrets but for the fun of the challenge, you can try to see how many you recognize by their accomplishments.

5 a prayer from Saint Thomas



» [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

As [The World's First Open Source Religion](#), the [Way of Yo](#) teaches us to take the perceptions and reactions of other divine humans as indications of our progress (or lack thereof) toward our goal of creating the clearest possible expression of the Truth, as revealed by [Yo](#) (Reality). So, if you have any thoughts, suggestions, or comments regarding this page—or any other aspect of Yoism—please [send us a message via email](#). After registering as a user, you can click the "add new comment" button above to leave a specific comment on this or any page that you want other visitors to be able to read. (For comments that are not about a specific page, please use the [email](#) option.)

