Hello everyone and welcome. My name is Patricia Anderson and I'm filling in for Dr Dr Christa Kuberry. She's taking some well-deserved time off. You should see a location poll on your Jean. As you come into the room if you wouldn't mind letting us know where you're signing in from. Just for fun, we have at least one person from Australia and the pacific Islands, one person from Europe, a bunch of people from North America and the Caribbean and we're glad you're here with us. I'm Patricia Anderson, executive producer of digital events here at Yoga Alliance, and I also am a CrossFit level 1 instructor, I am a 13-year practitioner of yoga and I'm approximately 75 per cent of the way through my 200-hour teacher training. It's my pleasure today to welcome Anya likes to refer to herself as a retired yoga teacher. That means she's not currently teaching yoga to the public but does still have an active practice. This is our third week in the series that Anya has been present presenting on, Origins and Authenticity in Modern Yoga. Just before all of you joined, I said, so, Anya, what are we talking about this week? And she said, "Well, you know how every week people have been asking me these modern questions and I've been saying politely we're not there yet." Guess what, everybody. This week we're there. This is very exciting. Not that the previous stories were uninteresting and unimportant. But she's been in a super creative and very accessible way giving us a history lesson of the very long story of yoga and how we got to the modern practice. With that, I'm going to put a few more enhancements in the chat and turn it over to our guest, Anya Foxen. Thanks for joining us.

ANYA FOXEN: Thanks, Tricia. Hi, perch. Just a reminder, like I said last time, I know we don't end up getting to all the stuff in the Q & A, but please do submit your stuff, because I get this neat Excel file afterwards and can use it to structure what we'll talk about next time. We are getting into the home stretch, as Tricia said. We'll do a little more on the historical side, just sort of building up to how it is we get the sort of synthesis of modern practice. But one thing we'll focus on today is bridging what the synthesis of modern yoga is actually a synthesis of. We'll talk about both historical Indian practices today today, but we'll also do a bit on the Western side of the background. Last week we also talked about a couple of different historical approaches to yoga, just to remind us where we were at. We had what I called yogas of doing, which were based in kind of the physical techniques of Tapas or asceticism, which you could use to mortify the body, sort of shut down the body, but also to perfect potentially or to power up the body. Again, we do find some things that later come up under the label of asanas here, as well as breath work, stuff like that. But the point that I emphasized last time was that we really have to pay attention to the mechanics and the goals of these practices, meaning what are they supposed to be doing to the body, and why? Because that may or may not be something that really sort of translates into our modern practice. Then towards the end we got into meditative or visionary, what I called yogas of knowing knowing, which were originally based on this idea literally ascending up to a higher level of reality. But from the Upanishads onwards they come about ascend ascending to a higher state of consciousness consciousness. There's a lot of complicated history here, as I've been pushing on and on. If we're talking about the Upanishads, we're talking about 500 BCE. Same with the origins of these various ascetic movements.
Because I do want us to get closer to modern day today we'll start by skipping forward two and a half millennia. So that lands us in India's medieval period, where we find this kind of synthesized movement emerging that we call hatha yoga. So those of you who were wondering about the chakras and stuff like that last time, this is kind of where we see the chakras and the subtle body concepts those are connected to really become relevant to physical yoga practices. I want to start off by talking about the subtle body. The subtle body is a term we use togenically describe features of the body that aren't strictly speaking physical or anatomical. It's actually a really interesting concept. We think about it as being mystical, but on some level these premodern ideas of the subtle body, all these vital energies and things like that, they're actually a very natural medical kind of concept. This is the language we use to describe how stuff in the body works to keep us alive, and to kind of connect the body to the environment around us. Premodern medicine, whether it's Indian, whether it's European, is always kind of spiritual because there's not really the sort of hard and fast line between nature and spirit that we're used to thinking with today. But the subtle body is also something that plays into these kinds of visionary meditative practices that we talked about towards the end of last time. We begin to imagine a kind of literal assent, what used to be a literal assent into the higher realms as a raising of consciousness, and all of this is happening on the level of the subtle body. I'm seeing a question in the Q & A here: When did hatha emerge? We're talking as far as the earliest texts that are recognizable as containing this stuff, around the 13th century or so CE now, common era. As I mentioned last time, some of these physical practices really would have been around for much longer. Again, really since potentially 500 BCE. But they would have been passed down orally among these ascetic movements. So we don't see them popping up in the text as much, just because we don't see something evidenced in text doesn't mean it's not there, although it makes our jobs as historians trickier. In hatha, we see this kind of visionary stuff being combined with the physical techniques. Let me give you an example of what that would look like. The background to this is sort of the idea that we zoned in on towards the end of last week's talk. We're talking about this broader framework of what we call the connection between microcosm, so literally the little world, which is us, our bodies, and the macrocosm, the big world or the universe. It's kind of this idea of as above, so below. The body, and this is how hatha treats the body, is a little world. It says at one point the body is a mirror. Everything that's going on out there in the universe is happening in miniature inside the human body. It's why we can take something that once used to be an external practice or a ritual and kind of meditatively visualize it as happening inside the body. If we really want to understand the origins of something like chakras, for instance, this is the system that we really need to think about. Chakras originally is the term used to refer to circles of deities. Let me share my screen here. We're talking about at the origins of this stuff not quite hatha yoga yet. Before that we have tantric traditions. These are emerging starting in the 7th, 8th century CE or so. And so in tantric traditions, what we find are these kind of circular arrangements. I'm going to pause talking here for a moment and hook up my air play. One place that we can see this stuff popping up is actually very physically in temple sites. This, for instance, is a Yogani temple, a circular form formation around the periphery of this temple you would have had deities, often God yeses arranged in a circle, a chakra, and at the center you would have the central goddess who would have been the supreme power in that particular sect or system. You also see this kind of thing in mandalas, which are like chakra, basically. This is a word that means circle. You see this kind of similar circular arrangement. You have the main deity at the center, sometimes a pair of deities, as you see here. And then you have this kind of expansion out in con-centric arrangements out to the periphery. Without getting too deep into the significance this would have had in tantric traditions, because they're super complicated, one thing that we can generalize and say is that
Tantra is theistic. This is about the gods and goddesses that you see pictured in some of these visual material cultural type things. Also, Tantra tends to have a positive view of the world because the world is kind of permeated. It's seen as permeated by these divine energies. Mandalas are very much supposed to be on some level a kind of representation of the cosmos. The cosmos is alive with these various forms of divinity. What this means is that unlike in ascetic traditions, the stuff we talked about last time, which might ultimately want to kind of shut down the body, escape from the material world, this means that tantric traditions actually don't necessarily want to get all the way out of matter. They don't necessarily want to destroy the body. Instead they want to perfect. They want to transform the body. A scholar named Davon flood says the general idea is in order to properly worship God you have to essentially become a God yourself. It's this idea again of divinity permeating everything, including us. How do you do this? How do you transform and perfect the human body? How does the human become divine. We do this by performing rituals. Tantra is ritualistic as a system. We can also do it by meditatively imagining this connection between the human body, on the one hand, and the large world on the other hand. This idea of microcosm, macrocosm. One other place we see this kind of circular arrangement of divine energy is in chakras. Here you have both the previous slide and this slide are Buddhist examples, which also goes to emphasize this isn't necessarily isolated to Hinduism. You see this in Jainism as well. The basic idea that you have, on the level of the human body as well as on the level of the broader world, these arrangements of, again, gods, goddesses, but ultimately energies that are constructed in a very particular kind of order that bridge the gap, especially in again meditative visionary practice, between what's inside of us and what's outside. Now, this happens because of the mental techniques that we come to, sort of associate with a particular type of yoga. In tantric ritual, you would sort of imagine that the body itself contains something like that circular temple of deities, that all these things really are sort of instantiated in various points in the body. And if it's kind of liberation that you're after ultimately, so you could transform the body and imbue it with this divine energy, but if enlightenment and liberation are the ultimate goals that's where we still find these traditions of the raising, the assent. In man las, everything flows from the center outward, but the center isn't a flat center. It's better to think of the mandala less as a circle and more like a cone. It also flows downward. The same with the chakras in the body. Everything flows downwards. The divine energy flows downward from the crown of the head through the rest of the physical space. So if you want to get back to that divine energy, back to the source, it makes sense that you go up. This kind of outward medicine physical assent in the cosmos would be mirrored by you visualizing these deities in your own body so you get all the way to the deity at the center, imagined to be the crown of the head. Now, text describing hatha yoga, as I mentioned, begin to emerge around the 13th century or so. Tantric systems have been around for quite a while by then. They emerge again as sort of appear synthesis. What they're synthesizing are these visionary tantric systems, the stuff I just described, where the yoga is primarily meditative. This is the yoga of knowing -- with the ascetic systems that had these sort of various methods of transforming and perfecting the body that are much more physical. These are yogas of doing. This is where you kind of get the system that some of us may be familiar with today in the context of modern hatha yoga. If you've heard of this notion that somewhere in the lower part of the torso, usually the base of the spine but in earlier texts it's sometimes the heart there's this divine feminine energy. The goal of yoga practice is to awaken the Kundalini to drive her up the central channel of the body through these various chakras and up to that other pole of divinity. This is classical hatha yoga. That's it in a nutshell. I see in the Q & A, what's all this stuff withtatt raw being linked to sex? That's it. Tantric systems tend to imagine the universe as a bipolar arrangement.
Like a lot of redoubled things in the world, one way of imagining that is in a gendered way. The Kundalini Sha Shakti is a feminine energy. The other is a masculine energy. When we talk about these visionary practices in tantric hatha yoga we're talking about meditatively joining the two principles. But remember, rituals that eventually become visionary often started out as being literal. So there is sexual ritual in certain tantric traditions, not all of them. But the principle would have been more or less the same. You act out externally something that's also supposed to be happening metaphysically internally. If that helps clarify things a bit. Those of you that know a bit about the history of this, these hatha yoga systems are where you see the the guys to whom some of the earlier texts are attributed. If you dig into the history of modern yoga as it's currently written, you'll begin to see some familiar stuff pop up in these medieval traditions. Now, the scholar that I mentioned, James M Malinsin also argues that the way that hatha texts e emerge in the 13th century is through this blending of what I'm calling ascetic and tantric techniques. That's maybe not exactly his wording. But for him, it's very much the ascetic techniques, so these physical techniques of the bunkeda, the various locked, seals, that are supposed to manipulate, channel the body's -- they're emblematic. The physical stuff is the stuff that's primary. To produce classical hatha yoga, which we see these texts, previously it wouldn't have been written down, you get these physical techniques that are repurposed, that are sort of reinterpreted and reframed from being strictly ascetic techniques to catering towards these tantric goals that have to do with awakening the Kundalini, potentially perfecting, even beginnizing the body. Another interesting thing that Malinson argues in that context, and this is important for us if we want to wrap our heads around all this stuff about authenticity, origins in modern yoga, is that this 13th century synthesis is maybe a really good premodern example of yoga being popularized, maybe even universalized in a certain way. Why do we suddenly see these really old, potentially millennia old ascetic techniques suddenly popping up in texts for the first time, whereas it had never happened previously? Well, because now they're being represented as not just something for ascetic yogis who sort of renounce the world but for regular householders householders, everyday people. And you see this in the sense that the goals of the practice are now a bit different. You don't really see this idea of shutting down the body completely as much anymore. These are instead transformative practices. They're supposed to again sort of perfect the body. Some of them are being advocated for the pursuit of the health of the body. Hatha yoga texts, unlike tantric texts, also tend to be nonsectarian. I emphasize the fact that Tantra is the theistic, about gods and goddesses. Hatha yoga texts also have deities, but their practices aren't framed around the worship of a particular deity as much. They're more universal, generic, and intentionally that way. Finally, you could see that maybe as an aspect of those other two things, the accessibility to regular householders and non-sectarianness, they tend to be a bit more naturalistic in their understandings of the body. So they're not necessarily thinking about chakras as very specific arrangements of very specific deities that are meant to mirror maybe sacred places out there in the outside world. This is where we begin to see the idea of chakras as anatomical points in the body. Because deities might vary from sect to sect, but everybody's got a heart or a throat or something like that. So again it plugs into this idea of popular popularizing, universalizing the practice. That might be a good way to stop, Tricia, in case there are questions that you think are pressing that I haven't already addressed.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: There was a question at the top. You sort of threw in there Upanishad and we missed which one.
ANYA FOXEN: That's the Katha. That's where we had all that stuff with the chariot metaphor from last time. Same text.
PATRICIA ANDERSON: Thank you. Let's see. These are all really good questions.
ANYA FOXEN: I'm scrolling through them now.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Here's one I think that you probably should answer before we move on, which is: Was the practice of hatha yoga specific to a caste as part of a caste system in India, to your knowledge, in your research? Do you see that at this point in time?

ANYA FOXEN: To my knowledge, generally not. It sort of depends on where you're looking. Insofar as hatha maybe connects to some more transgressive tantric practices. I mean, these things sometimes very intentionally cross-caste boundaries, because that is itself a form of transgression. There's maybe -- a useful way to think about it is to frame it similarly to how we think about modern yoga. It's not necessarily that it would have been like the Vedas, where certain classes of society don't have access to the system. It would have been maybe a little bit less that. It's not necessarily forbidden for anyone to practice this stuff. But I like the sociological element of Jim Malnison's argument. This is set down in text, popularized for the consumption of urban folks or something like that, on who is this really for? Who is this ultimately being marketed towards, if we want to use modern language? I don't think there's a direct analogy.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Then there would be some people who would be elevated as teachers because it's an oral tradition.

ANYA FOXEN: Yeah, definitely. This is the argument that Malinson makes, is that if you think about the social reality behind all this, texts are expensive to produce. Before the printing press, it's somebody sitting down and copying all this stuff. This knowledge, if it was passed down among ascetic traditions, it would have been esoteric knowledge. Puff the guru who has lineage of disciples and that's the tradition. Whereas what you have now is funding available essentially to bring these gurus in to set down some of these teachings in text, disseminated to a broader audience. So it's not exactly our reality. It's important to acknowledge that. But there's maybe an analogy here in terms of the role of the teacher and how the role of the teacher shifts once it's texts and not oral tradition that we're talking about.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: That makes great sense. I'll do this last question and then we'll let you continue on and come back to the more. This is interesting because Linda is asking: Is there something that the physical hatha practice, is there asana, a description you could give of what that might have looked like in that time? Are people making diagrams in the texts?

ANYA FOXEN: This is where it's not exactly my area. I think Seth Powell has done good work on this stuff and I think he's not necessarily just looking at manuscripts but at other material evidence, maybe even temples and things like that, where he might see depictions of some of these poses. This kind of maybe gets us into my next point. In answering the question I'll begin to gesture towards that. The stuff that I just described, so this kind of synthesis of hatha yoga yoga, it does stay remarkably consistent, even into the 19th century or so. I'm generalizing when I say that. Obviously things do change and evolve. One of the things that changes and evolves is that we begin to see this proliferation of asanas that are increasingly at least named if not described in texts. So Jason birch, another scholar at Soaz in England has a good article on this where he says once you hit the 17th and 18th centuries there are dozens of asanas. Now, the interesting thing, and this is where they might be described but not described specifically or maybe you just get a name and there's inconsistency between manuscripts, there's definitely some overlap between that and what we would recognize in terms of our repertoire of asanas today. But it's not a full-on overlap and that's important to point o to. Just because we see physical practices, again, these bundas, prana techniques, asana, doesn't mean now we have
our modern practice, because that stuff changes too, which makes it tricky to put your finger on anything, which I like as a historian, but as a practitioner it's frustrating. Can't it just be one thing? But you do begin --

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Then you don't have the whole picture.
ANYA FOXEN: Exactly, which then you have to negotiate where your lines are.
PATRICIA ANDERSON: It's a whole other conversation. Don't let me distract us.
ANYA FOXEN: So I guess the shorter answer to that question is we definitely do see some descriptions of physical poses and other physical practices. We see those as early as these 13th century texts, although they're a bit less robust there. That definitely seems to become more visible, for whatever reason, as the centuries go on. But if we take Malinson's argument, we can argue some of this stuff is really much older than even that. It goes back to before the common era. But it's also helpful to think about why is it there, when a yogi in let's say the 16th century is doing this particular pose, why is he or occasionally she, doing that pose? What is it supposed to be doing for them? Which may or may not be the same thing that we think it's doing for us. There's I want to give you all one example of how this more traditional stuff floats forward, and then we're going to shift gears a bit. But the example that I want to give you, I really want to give you in order to illustrate why it's useful to consider the diversity of what yoga looks like today. Like I said, this sort of classical medieval hatha yoga stuff really does continue. It evolves, but it continues into the 19th century or so. The 19th century is where we begin to see more specifically modern physical, cultural types of interpretations, also begin to make their way in. But to some extent, some of that stuff also still continues into today. There are definitely some systems that you can find right now that have more or less wholesale preserved those practices. Just because it's where my own yoga practice background is to some extent and what I looked at in my first book, I have an example. Nanda who came in the 1920, taught only to his close disciples in the United States. He started the energization exercises, really Europe calisthenics. You can compare from pamphlets what this looked like to popular exercise manuals from that same time period and it's the same thing. He's using those calisthenics maybe a little differently than the way they would have been used in the European systems, which is why I keep emphasizing it's important to think about what the practice is supposed to be doing, not just what it looks like, but what is it doing inside your body? But generally speaking, yoga Nanda, once you get down to not the preparatory stuff but what is the practice itself, it's a very traditional kind of tantric what we would call N Nada or sound-based visionary yoga. It incorporates these various physical techniques, these Bundas and mewed are a -- Mudras, but these are in the service of this much more complex tantric framework. If you want to get a first-hand idea of what hatha yoga would have looked like a few centuries ago, talk to someone who does this yoga. It's changed and adaptive, but reflect reflective of what you would find if you looked at a text from the 16th century. Yoga Nanda is an interesting figure because he is an initiate into this traditional lineage of tantric yoga, but he's doing his thing, so we're in the 20th century now, at the same time yoga is undergoing this huge transformation in India and being reinterpreted and modernized into this universal kind of style of physical culture. Nanda's younger brother falls more on that end of things. Of course they're both contemporaries of others. There were a lot of these folks who were working on the same stuff around the same time. We'll come back to those guys next time when we try to tie things up here. Because they really have a very interesting relationship to all the older tantric ascetic kind of stuff. So that's there. That continues in their yoga too. But they also really do innovate. As part of their innovations, they borrow not just have various Indigenous Indian types of physical culture, so we have asanas and physical movements in yoga, but yoga of course never existed in a vacuum. There are all sorts of other ways people train and move their bodies in premodern
India. So they're drawing on some of that. But they also really borrow from European physical culture traditions. So this is kind of the point of us shifting gears a little bit. Tricia, before I take us on this new path, are there any other things that are specifically dinned that we -- Indian that we want to address?

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Amy had asked when does something stop being yoga and become simply a workout? I'm not sure this is what she meant with that question, but I think what you're talking about addresses that. It sounds like people are taking asana and calling it exercise.

ANYA FOXEN: Yeah. I think the lines are a bit blurrier than we'd like to admit.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: For sure. That's part of the practice.

ANYA FOXEN: Is your workout spiritual? Because if so... it gets fuzzier there. But the answer to that question, at least the way I would answer it, really has to do with this idea of: OK, why are you doing the thing? What's the goal? What are you trying to accomplish? What do you think is happening? Do you have a larger framework? That's where I think you can begin to --

PATRICIA ANDERSON: It's not like on July 7, 1776, yoga became exercise, right?

ANYA FOXEN: Yeah, exactly.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Someone asked a question about -- and you may or may not know the answer to this, but I thought I would throw it at you: This history that you're sharing with us, is it a globally recognized history in? Is it told differently in India today? Do you have any insight to share about that?

ANYA FOXEN: I do to some extent, although it's tricky.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Tricky. I could talk about that for 90 minutes by itself tricky?

ANYA FOXEN: Yeah. One thing that I can confidently say is that a lot of this history is very new in terms of us looking at these sources and systematically thinking about what happened there, what was the evolution? And so I think like anything, different people from different perspectives will tell the story differently. The stuff I'm about to get into with the European side of things, obviously things like colonialism and the way that influences our perspective really matter in that context. But I think to some extent it's a new history also because we haven't really taken modern yoga practice very seriously until recently. So nobody really thought to look at it in a particularly systematic way. You have Lynages telling their own histories, but that big picture isn't necessarily there. People are like: What is this? It's not a real thing. Why would academics write about this?

PATRICIA ANDERSON: That gets to Natalie's question. You refer to these texts and she's like: What texts are they? What are you talking about? I don't want to put words in your mouth about that. I have some ideas, but go ahead and tell us.

ANYA FOXEN: I assume it's the 13th century classical hatha yoga stuff.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: She's saying when you say these things appear in 17th and 18th century texts, and then they ask for a visual, that's a whole other thing. But I think very specifically a lot of us as we're learning yoga tradition and history we reference suit are as and I think that's maybe the direction of this question.

ANYA FOXEN: That synthesis of the ascetic techniques being repurposed toward something else. Again this is Jim Malinson's argument. That you clearly see happening.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Natalie, thanks for further clarifying. She was mentioning when you were talking about asana appearing in texts.

ANYA FOXEN: That synthesis of the ascetic techniques being repurposed toward something else. Again this is Jim Malinson's argument. That you clearly see happening.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Natalie, thanks for further clarifying. She was mentioning when you were talking about asana appearing in texts.

ANYA FOXEN: That synthesis of the ascetic techniques being repurposed toward something else. Again this is Jim Malinson's argument. That you clearly see happening.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Do you know if it's with an I or U? I can google him.

ANYA FOXEN: With an I like the birch tree. I was thinking text titles. So the other place that a lot
of this stuff appears, it's more accessible for folks looking for resources, is a blog called the luminescent luminescent. That's run by a few of these scholars that are working out of Soaz. PATRICIA ANDERSON: You say Soaz and I think of the muscle that hurts. ANYA FOXEN: I never remember what the acronym is. PATRICIA ANDERSON: Soss? ANYA FOXEN: Yes. PATRICIA ANDERSON: I'll google it. ANYA FOXEN: The luminescent. PATRICIA ANDERSON: I will check it out. You keep talking and I will investigate. ANYA FOXEN: Awesome. We're pretty good on time, because this gives us a little bit of a space to switch those gears. We will still be talking about that other same group of scholars, because the next point that I want to bring up for us is something that folks have been asking about since I think the first talk basically, which is Mark singleton's research. Some of you may be familiar with Mark singleton's book, yoga body. I have to credit singleton with a lot he re. Basically most of what I've been doing for the last ten years of my life is really just building and expanding on his work. So specifically what I'm interested in is a very certain part of Singleton's thesis. For those of you who haven't necessarily read the book, let me share my screen again. I'll give you the quote. This will give you some idea of what he's all about. Singleton says: Postural modern yoga -- so the stuff we practice today -- displaced, or was the cultural successor of, the established methods of stretching and relaxing that had already become commonplace in the West through harmonnial gymnastics and female physical culture. I like to his if I am anyone so it's less biological there, but fair enough. Then a little further down that same page he says: Modern asana practice emerged in a dialectic relationship to physical culture and harmonnial gymnastician. It absorbed many of these teachings, claimed them as its own and sold them back to Western reapership as the purest expression of Indian physical culture. That is page 154 of yoga body. There's one aspect of singleton's argument that I want to say I have an issue with. I don't think it's necessarily his intent to say this, but I think this is the way that his argument maybe comes off to some of us. It's that you have all of these kinds of traditional Indian practices and then they're blended into these secular modern forms of European physical culture and that's how we get modern yoga. This is not what singleton says, but I think this leads us sometimes to then make all sorts of other statements like modern yoga is a corruption or it's a bastardization or it's a watering down of some Indian system. So one thing that I'd like to say right off the bat, if we want to talk about it that way, we could look at who's doing a lot of the "corrupting" and the bastardizing. Often these are Indian yogis that he are transforming these systems. Obviously it's more complicated than that and colonialism is a thing, even just within India there is kind of a class element here, often these guys are cultural elites in a sense. But I think it's also really important to give these Indian innovators some agency. They know what they're doing. And what they're doing really isn't anything new. Yoga systems have always evolved, transformed to fit their time and circumstances. There's no golden past when everything was static and now modernity and everything's a mess. Things have always been a mess. But I think the other maybe even deeper problem here is this tendency that we have to label Indian practice as traditional and spiritual and on the other hand label Western practices as secular and modern. There's this fantasy that India isn't also an evolving, modern country and that here in the West we somehow magically don't have history and tradition. It's what we call Orientalism and pointed headed scholarly talk. I think this is where my work has been filling out what I view as the other side to sing singleton's argument. Because the thing is if you look at these European systems of physical culture, these gymnastics and things like that, their roots are just as traditional and just as spiritual as Indian
yoga systems. So rather than looking at modern yoga as a kind of corruption or a watering down, I think it's actually a lot more productive to look at this as a synthesis, as a cultural hybrid. Then we could talk about there are still these other potential issues with the way that yoga works in capitalist society, the way that maybe aspects of Indian culture are tokenized other appropriated in modern American yoga. Those are absolutely issues and issues we need to talk about and address. But to some extent I think that getting our history straight can help us have a more productive conversation about these things, where we really can get into the mechanics of what's happening. In the time we have left, what I'm going to do is fill out a little bit of what I mean when I say these Western practices also have this sort of premodern traditional history. And then next time we can get down into talking about, well, then what is modern yoga and what does that all look like? Let me show you what I mean when I say that the stuff on the Western side also has a spiritual history. Because we really are talking about two analogous traditions that have been tangled together. We've sort of erased the Western side a bit because we forgot it existed because it was premodern and didn't fit our modern world view. We tend to think of this stuff as magic rather than science. But then we stumble upon it again and misidentify it with these Indian systems that are allowed to be traditional and premodern. I'll use the chakras as an example, just because we just looked at those. Why waste all of that background? This one, the visuals really do help. What you have here, what you have on the left, is an Indian chakra system. Remember, chakras were originally circles of deities that were internalized into the body in tantric ritual, also represented as lotuses, a typical seat for a deities, how they're depicted icon graphically. You can see if you squint hard at your screen. There are deities inside the lotuss. There's no one standard system of chakras because they're sect specific, so which deity and chakra and how many chakras there are Senators that earlier time period. By the 19th century or so a system of six chakras becomes kind of the most common variant. So that's a version of what we see here, although it's more complicated. This is a sectarian depiction. You see these realized beings in the upper part of the head. What I want to bring your attention to is the image on the right. The image on the right appears in one of the first Western texts to describe the chakras, by Charles Led better, from 1927. And led better, along with his description of Indian chakras, at least as best as he can understand them, cites this example from originally a German text. It was published by one of the guys's colleagues and students, so technically more late 17th century, and this is from a 19th century French translation of that text. There's a complicated genealogy there too. But ledbett ledbetter duplicates this image and essentially says: Here are chakras in the Western tradition. But the thing is that's not actually what these are. If you look at the original text, the German text, these are planets mapped onto the human body. This is astrology more or less. And although it's also a subtle body system, meaning it's maybe analogous in some ways to what you have going on on the left -- it's not to say there's no comparison to be made. These are not the same thing. This is not a yolkic system. These are not chakras. This is another cultural thing. It might be comparable, but it's not the same. So when we see early modern gymnastics cropping up in Europe kind of 18th, 19th century, the gymnastics really aren't secular. There are all sorts of spiritual assumptions that are being made, if you look at the origins of this stuff. They have all sorts of potentially spiritual goals, and it's this system, represented by the image on the right, that they're really drawing on. So here's a couple of other examples. Here you see two different but complementary versions of what we're talking about when we talk about the subtle body in Western culture. These are a bit earlier. This is early 17th century. It's actually from more or less a medical textbook. Both these systems rely on the same kind of analogy. Here's the commonality that we saw in our earlier Indian systems, this idea that the human body is a universe in miniature, the idea of microcosm and macrocosm, that these are connected through...
a series of corresponds, things happening out there are areflected here. On the left you see the human body mapped on to the solar system. This is 1617, so we're still dealing with a geo-ken trick cosmos, meaning the earth and not the sun is at the center of the solar system. There you see the orbits of the celestial bodies or spheres as they would have been called, mapped onto the body. The way they're mapped is according to musical proportions, particularly. On the right you have a related image. There you have the idea that there's even a larger universe that's divided into basic three realms, that are on the logically different in a certain way. There's the terrestrial realm, that's the earth. Then you have the ethereal or the astral realm. So the terrestrial is associated with the bottom of the torso and the rest is the stars and planets, heavenly bodies. Then you have this curious point of the sun, always analogous to the heart heart. Some of you may remember from the Upanishads last week, 101 are the veins of the heart and one goes up to the crown of the head and see the same kind of thing in the sun. Again there are comparisons that one could make. That's the second realm. The third realm is all the way up in the head. This is kind of as high as you can get before you get to God, essentially. This is 17th century Europe. These are at least couched in Christianity, if not explicitly Christian systems. To really dig into how it is that we get here here, because this is still comparatively late, 1617, that would take much more time than what we have. So what I'm going to say is that this stuff is very, very old. This idea that the universe is constructed according to mathematical, especially according to musical proportions is normally attributed to pith ago Russ, the guy you may have learned in school.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: As soon as you say his name, A squared plus B squared plus C squared.

ANYA FOXEN: He's an interesting figure. I think it would be culturally anachronistic to call him a yogi, but it's an interesting analogy. This guy is a mystic, an ascetic, he has these metaphysical stuff going on. If we want to find the roots of that stuff, we have to look at him, at Plato at airtologist, at the stoics. We have to look at ancient Greek medicine, especially Galen there. This is the deeper background, I argue, of what singleton is gesturing towards but never explores when he says harmonnial gymnastics. Actually, what I call this system in my research is harmonnialism, because there's not a neat baked name for it.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: I love that you came up with your own word for it. That's fantastic.

ANYA FOXEN: It's not exactly my word. Just to give credit where credit is due. There are a couple of other scholars that use that word to talk about the modern versions of this stuff. The reason they use the word is actually the reason that I like it myself, which is that even as this stuff changes over the millennia, harmony is still kind of the keyword there. All these guys are talking harmony, harmony, harmony. I know that last time I made a big deal or maybe the time before, kind of talking about yoga as yoke or rigging. These are ways --

PATRICIA ANDERSON: With the chariot. It was last time. Don't let me interrupt you.

ANYA FOXEN: Awesome. If you remember what I was trying to do there, those are ways we can translate yoga as a term, as a word, into English, while still keeping that kind of original Indian framework, the set of assumptions. But what I want to get us to play with and think about is that if we wanted to find an actual analogy to yoga in English, the Western tradition more broadly, I think harmony is a pretty good candidate. Especially if we think about yoga as not just a practice but a state that we strive towards, that idea of yoga as union. In South Asia, in these systems, we strive toward yoga. In the West what we often strive towards, and you see this in the text, is harmony. That's the big picture. Just looking forward to next time, where I really want to get into some of the nitty-gritty of cross-cultural exchange, one important qualification to all of this that I want to point to is when I say ancient Greek, really what I mean is something that's
much broader maybe than what it sounds like. It's really easy, and you see this in the modern academy, to start with the Western classics and then you skate straight up into white supremacy. That's not only very morally problematic, obviously, it is, but it's really historically inaccurate as a trajectory. So many of the most important texts that we have when we're talking about the roots of this stuff that's on the screen -- let me stop sharing it now -- if we're talking about Greek philosophy, these are texts produced in Alexandria, which is Egypt. It's not modern Greece or Europe; it's Africa. If we're looking for historical continuity after the Roman empire fractures, we don't see a lot of this stuff popping up in northwestern Europe until the renaissance. But it wasn't there to begin with. That's not where the earlier action was centered. Again geographically we're talking about lex Alexandra. They were Syrian. All of this continues. It never disappears. There's Dark Ages. And where we really seeing it hitting the next stage in its development is in the Arabic world and it's not until the renaissance it makes it into Western Europe. When I say Western we need to take that with a grain of salt. No yells mean European and I certainly do not mean white. So this is where we get into a whole other can of worms, how much interaction would this have had with Indian systems? The fact of the matter is we don't have the sources to say. But I think it's interesting to look at how these systems are both analogous and very old, if we're looking at what happens in the late 19th century when we get to modern yoga. So I think that's almost at time, Tricia, so I guess I'll stop there.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Yes.

ANYA FOXEN: Is there one final thing we can address in 60 seconds?

PATRICIA ANDERSON: There is not enough here that we can address, not enough time that we can address any of these things, except I want to say a couple of things. I think it's super interesting to reflect on how, throughout the course of human history, whatever human history you're looking at, it's a consistent proportion by humans trying to understand the bodies they live in and the world around them. That's the theme that I keep coming across, however kind of history you're studying, whatever continent you're studying it from, whether you're thinking about spirituality or organized religion or yoga or exercise, that's basically the whole story of humanity. And then all of us fighting with each other and all the bad things that happened. But that's a whole other seg segment. I wanted to raise that there's a lot of grat gratitude and excitement for this conversation and your delivery today. People have a lot of interesting questions. They say it's very valuable and they're really enjoying it. I offer my -- actually, I'm not going to apologize for leaving you with questions, because I have a feeling that Dr Anya, in her infinite wisdom, wants us to be thinking about these things. Of course, yoga is a path of inquiry. There's still another segment. I hope you all will join us next Thursday, same time, same place. We thank you for joining us today. Thanks, Dr Anya, for a thought-provoking, interesting presentation and conversation.

ANYA FOXEN: Thank you, everyone.

PATRICIA ANDERSON: Stay well, everyone. Thank you.