

# Yoga: a boundary object?

Yoga: um objeto de fronteira? (abstract: p. 14)

El *yoga*: ¿un objeto de frontera? (resumen: p. 14)

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Yoga originated in the East and was appropriated by the West. It transits between tradition and research, intersects science and religion, oscillating among the profane and the sacred. It has morphed from social invisibility into a mainstream practice. It can be comprehended as a philosophical school, as well as a mind-body practice recognized by the World Health Organization, generating contact zones and symbolic frontiers with different fields of knowledge. In contemporary times it is discussed by the social and human sciences. This essay offers reflections on how yoga has been approached by the fields of health, religion, philosophy, art, education, anthropology and sociology, and discusses the development of yoga as an object of boundaries.

**Keywords:** Yoga. Philosophical system of yoga. Symbolic boundaries. Complementary and integrative practices.



## Introduction

Although yoga emerged in India as a tradition transmitted from master to disciple, the secrets of which were revealed through initiation, passed on through a generational chain of instructors and disciples that kept the tradition alive, nowadays this practice has assumed different expressions. The initiation lineage of yoga still survives in some strongholds in India and within the New Religious Movements in the West and the East, however the trend is to professionalize the practice in order to guarantee a market for its professionals<sup>1</sup>.

In the last few decades, yoga left behind social invisibility and gained global prominence, forming frontier zones<sup>2</sup> with multiple cultures. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the first unidirectional currents emerged that transported knowledge from India to the West. However, currently, yoga flows through multidirectional and reverse networks, exposing new forms of hypermobility, to the point that North American yogis export yoga globally through proselytism, marketing and *seva* tourism (impersonal service)<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ocean, in the same manner as traditional Indian medicine has become a powerful symbol of the Indian nationalist identity and resistance to westernization<sup>4</sup>, yoga has taken on the role of geopolitical projection in India, led by the Prime Minister. In his speech to the United Nations in 2015, Narendra Modi declared June 21st as the International Yoga Day<sup>5</sup>. During the celebration of the International Yoga Day in 2019<sup>6</sup>, Modi emphasized that yoga acts as a unifying force in a world where hate ideologies divide siblings, and that this union also connects all the fauna and flora on the planet.

We consider that yoga, which until recently was more present in the fields of science of religion and health, is gaining a new approach with the study that Lamont and Molnar<sup>7</sup> carried out on boundaries in the social sciences and, in particular, regarding symbolic boundaries, which emerge from the relational processes associated with four areas: a) social and collective identity; b) inequalities between social classes, ethnicities and genders; c) professions, science and knowledge and d) communities, national identities and space boundaries.

In this regard, the purpose of this article is to discuss yoga as a boundary object that intersects different fields of knowledge, comparing the aforementioned perspectives<sup>7</sup> and some updated data on the production of knowledge on yoga, in an argumentative essay. The article does not intend to provide an exhaustive survey on yoga in the Capes thesis database, but a snapshot of some fields of knowledge. Now, if on one hand boundary objects are interfaces that play a key role in the development and maintenance of coherence, which permeates the social worlds and symbolic boundaries, on the other, they allow for different frames (social brand, gender configurations, contesting the meaning of social barriers). The functioning of yoga in the fields of health, religion, philosophy, and in the social, educational and artistic fields, as well as the relationship between such areas, such as we have developed in this article, highlight a fertile horizon for the production of meanings, distinctions and specific ways of sharing, restrictions and transformation.



## Yoga in Health

The Brazilian health field included yoga when the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices<sup>8</sup> was signed, and also through bills Nos. 719/2011<sup>9</sup>, 145/2017<sup>10</sup> and 849/2017<sup>11</sup>. One of the implications of the inclusion of yoga in the National Health System (SUS) is the reduction of inequality in access, since in the past this practice was restricted to certain social classes. In addition to its offer at the SUS, the flourishing of yoga is also taking place in different social classes and ethnicities, overcoming social and symbolic boundaries through small civil society initiatives, such as the case of Yoga Marginal. In a community psychosociological approach, Tainá Antonio Fernandes<sup>12</sup> is presenting yoga in the Baixada Fluminense, in Rio de Janeiro, as a possible way to transform the frontier that intersects the social and health fields. The practice of yoga in the Baixada Fluminense allows individual practitioners to differentiate themselves from others through a sense of belonging shared in their subgroup, one of the elements that form social identity.

In the international scenario, a search at Pubmed / Medline on March 17, 2020, without filters, yielded 5,376 articles on yoga. In comparison, a search using the publication date filter including articles from January 1st 1950 to December 31st 1990 (50 years) resulted in 389 articles on yoga. In view of the fact that the database is currently offering more than 5,000 articles, an increase of 1,382%, we can declare that yoga has entered its 2.0 phase, with much more diversified studies than those found in the database 20 years ago. Furthermore, technology is emphasizing the offer of yoga practice. Rankings sites in the areas of health, trends and fashion are listing the most highly rated yoga apps of the moment<sup>(c)</sup>.

It is not surprising that there is an increase in the search for yoga in our contemporary society, coined by Han<sup>13</sup> as the society of tiredness, in which there is an excessive appraisal of hyperactive individuals, who drag themselves into the productive routine performing multiple tasks, becoming subject to mental disorders and stripped of contemplative ability. However, there are those who criticize the excesses of the marketing aura that yoga involves today. This is the case of Alex Auder<sup>14</sup>, an American *provocateur* of Instagram, who mocks the wellness industry, its relentless marketing and the commoditization of yoga. On her Instagram live, she appears wrapped in an Ikea rug saying: “Being a curator sponsored by 500 brands represents a lot of pressure. Mercedes takes me quickly and efficiently to my ayahuasca ceremonies, while Coca-Cola keeps me hydrated”.

The globalization of yoga has been taking place at such an accelerated rate that it has prompted a discussion on the standardization of its therapeutic practice. The term Yogatherapy can be attributed to Krishnamacharya, in the late 19th century, and was later developed by the traditional yoga institute Kaivalyadhama, in India. Nayyar<sup>15</sup>, who occupies the most conservative axis of the spectrum of this discussion, argues that the West uses yoga as a therapy for physical illnesses, but that Indians regard it as one of the philosophical schools in India. Why, asks the author, should Indians adjust their system - widely tested over time - because of a need in the West? At the center of the debate is the power struggle over the creation of a centralizing and certifying body that would be located in India. At the other end of the spectrum of the discussion on yoga, the Ministry of Health of India (AYUSH), concerned with the standardization of yoga

<sup>(c)</sup> Best Yoga Apps of 2019. Available from: <https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness-exercise/top-yoga-iphone-android-apps>.



and, above all, with its teaching, formed a working group in agreement with the World Health Organization (WHO), the WHO Benchmarks for Training in Yoga, held in New Delhi, in February 2019<sup>(d)</sup>, an event attended by one of the authors of this article. Some points discussed were: the regulatory approach to practice in WHO member countries; the subjects that will appear in the teaching grid of the different levels of training (basic, advanced and postgraduate) and issues of safety concerning the asanas and breathing practices. The guidelines discussed in this working group by 16 yoga experts from around the world will be published in a future document. This debate on the standardization of yoga points to narratives of scientists trying to attribute a select quality to other scientists and to scientific methods in order to circumscribe a rhetorical frontier between science and non-scientific knowledge.

In the national scenario, a relevant issue is the regulation of the profession. Lamont and Molnár illustrate the way in which the concept of boundaries has been used to understand how professions have distinguished themselves from each other, and whether they should be defined by their specific knowledge, belonging to a phase of the development of an occupation, or as an institutional organization that controls access, training, accreditation, performance and evaluation in the field. Concerning yoga, a survey carried out on Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 revealed that the Draft Laws pending in the Chamber of Deputies, related to the regulation of yoga, are as follows: PL 1371/2007 (with 8 bills' projects attached), PL 3204/2012, PL 939/2015, PL 4282/2016. Some of the Draft Laws attached to the first bill deal with topics specific to Physical Educators. Thus, with legislative comings and goings, the Federal Council of Physical Education continues to try to appropriate the practice of yoga, which still remains in a professional limbo, a no man's land<sup>2</sup>, twenty years after the advent of the first PL that tried to regulate it. However, in relation to this, the self-regulating character of each group of practitioners should not be despised, and we also consider it pertinent that the professional category associated with labor rights include teachers with the most varied backgrounds.

## Is Yoga Religion?

It is precisely because yoga is not exclusively characterized as a religion that it accepts attributions such as tradition, culture, philosophy and psychology, the most recent one being the already mentioned definition of mind-body practice. Yoga draws its cosmology mainly from Samkhya, which is atheist. Its constitutive elements are: purusha (consciousness) and prakriti (matter), meaning spirit, individual essence of being, and primordial substance, the origin of the phenomenal universe, respectively<sup>16</sup>. However, the mystical language of yoga, which once flowed from retreats, mountain tops, sacred caves, temples and forests, where ancient yogis wandered, is now confronted with the logic of the scientific rationality and the narratives of the Western New Religious Movements<sup>17</sup>. Interestingly, as Simões notes, scientific rationality, contrary to what one would think, has legitimized yoga, at least in Brazil, as a new belief system, which produces salvation goods, and has failed to provoke a process of religious disenchantment of yoga.

<sup>(d)</sup> Working Group Meeting for Benchmarks in Training in Yoga. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/moayush/posts/who-working-group-meeting-for-benchmarks-in-training-in-Yogathe-world-health-org/2795531750672068/>



Yoga, according to Jung, is the psychology of the Hindus, with an empirical and existential basis; a mechanism in which the ego is transcended and replaced by a universal consciousness<sup>16</sup>. On November 4th, 1938, Jung delivered lecture II on yoga<sup>18</sup>, in which he said:

We are inclined in Europe to think of Yoga as a kind of acrobatics but it is really principally philosophy [...]. Yoga is the oldest practical philosophy of India; it is the mother of psychology and philosophy which are one and the same thing in India. It is impossible for anyone to be a philosopher there, till he has undergone the spiritual development of Yoga<sup>18</sup>.

As we can see, yoga drifts between boundaries like a chameleon, bearing elements that, for some, have a more religious, philosophical or psychological character. However, the mythical origins of yoga and its relationship with divine beings continue to serve as strong references for the sacred and spiritual practices. In this regard, see the description of the first image in the Yoga and Art section.

## Yoga and Philosophy

In March 2020, the Capes database was searched for academic production on yoga in Brazil, and we observed that the 181 theses and dissertations therein were not defended in Philosophy Programs, but elsewhere. What is this absence due to? Firstly, the proximity between philosophical traditions differs from those produced in Europe and is still recent, with the exception of certain initiatives such as: *Jornadas de Filosofia Oriental e Intercultural* (USP), *Colóquios de Filosofia Oriental* (Unicamp) and the *Associação Latino-Americana de Filosofia Intercultural* (ALAFI). A second reason, linked to the first, is that such efforts have not yet reached the curriculum grid, and this epistemological absence displays all the properties of a boundary: visibility, durability, salience, but also permeability, and permeability is part of the philosophical aspects of yoga.

According to Aristotle (384-322 a.C.), the three great branches of philosophy are Theory, Praxis and Poetics. Mathematics, Logic (analytical), Physics and Metaphysics (ontology) are found in Theory, while Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric are part of Praxis, and the study of Tragedy was maintained in the book Poetics. When we look at the position of yoga within the official Philosophical Schools of India and try to conceptualize the six *Darshanas*, presented in well-known pairs, which deal with the ultimate nature of reality (*Nyaya* and *Vaisesika*, *Samkhya* and yoga, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*), we can affirm that *Nyaya* contains Logic and Analytical Philosophy; *Vaisesika* deals with the ultimate, atomic nature of the construction of consciousness; *Samkhya* explains the original relationships and developments between consciousness and matter; yoga contains contemplation and meditation; *Mimamsa* (*Purva-Mimamsa*) contains the hermeneutics of the Vedas; while *Vedanta* (*Uttara-Mimamsa*) contains the essence of the Vedas. The most striking difference between *Samkhya* and yoga is that yoga is practical and depends more on achievement than understanding, whereas *Samkhya* enumerates and explains the behavior of the world according to the union of the principles *purusha* and *prakriti*. Obviously, it must be taken into account that this is a propaedeutic distinction. Each



school contains a historical temporality of themes, works and authors notably more complex than these two approaches presented in a comparative character<sup>16</sup>. Yoga Dárshana synthesized by Patañjali<sup>19</sup>, linked to *Samkhya* of the Vyasa tradition, and the late *Vedanta* of Shankarasharya are, however, the most prominent branches within orthodoxy. Notwithstanding, in Tantra and Buddhism, there are proper meanings of yoga in texts of the most diverse lineages. It is evident, as explained, that philosophical content is present in traditions both of Greek and Indian origin. In this context, to what extent can one consider yoga a philosophy and consider philosophy yoga?

Yoga will be philosophy when it deepens the investigation of the being, its bases and connections beyond the common sense and from the perspective of a radical will sustained by practice. Nevertheless, it can be said that philosophy becomes yoga whenever it is taken from an existential, pragmatic and soteriological point of view. Thus, we emphasize the strong connection between national communities and spatial boundaries, where actors dialogue and produce knowledge that replenishes their research.

A first connection, which appears frequently in training and specialization courses in yoga, consists of presenting the Ethics of yoga, starting by the *Yamas* and *Nyamas* just as Patañjali unveiled them in the Yoga Sutras<sup>19</sup>. However, the non-philosophical approach often leads to mistaken notions of heteronomy, in addition to omitting the complex relationship of religious and non-religious codes of ethics that occur in subjects who experience multiculturalism.

The second connection that we now point to refers to the question: how and to what extent did free thinkers develop their philosophical communications about their spiritual foundations (and spiritual practices) that form and transcend them? Yoga, in the work of the philosopher Vilém Flusser, is an important connection in this regard. Flusser, who embraced the self-imposed mission of helping to save Western thought from extinction, created an admonitory work entitled “*A Dúvida*”<sup>20</sup>. The starting point was the reflection on doubt as a historical philosophical problem, encompassing Descartes, with an authentic faith in doubt leading to nihilism where everything is nothing, the philosopher seeks to minimize the damage not only of nihilism, but also of what he calls small talk and pride, which undermine the true philosophical discussion.

The method used by Flusser is an unusual procedure in philosophical handiwork, in the strict sense of the term. Namely: the concentration exercise according to “An Introduction to the secrets of yoga”<sup>20</sup> (p. 31). Now, in yoga, concentration is one of the modes of meditation known by the Sanskrit term *dharana*. In the Yoga Sutras, Patañjali defines it as the fixation of the mind on a realm<sup>19</sup>. The starting point was the exhaustive analysis of doubt. Then, in the preliminary exercise of concentration, a shock ensued due a revelation:

From an existential point of view, a single effort to concentrate according to the rules of yoga is worth a thousand treatises by Nietzsche or Bergson. It illuminates, in a ray of immediate experience, what Nietzsche and Bergson, *inter alia*, intend, perhaps without knowing it<sup>20</sup>. (p. 33)



The comparative and praiseworthy revelation of yoga at the expense of works by distinguished philosophers follows from the exposure of a considerable difference in understanding between the practicing reader and the non-practitioner, and the deepening of the descriptive narrative of personal practice. Furthermore, he presents us with an allegory: that of beads on a necklace, using imagery to try to encompass a little more than words would do. In it, yogic concentration not only shows how one thought arises and is followed by others, but favors the deepening of consciousness in the dynamic observation / creation.

However, this is not the only conclusion which Flusser draws from the practice of yogic concentration. Yoga, extended to the scope that he circumscribes in his work, helps him to gain insight to continue creating with reasoning and thus reallocating the guidelines of Philosophy. In other words, the philosopher Flusser reveals that there is a better place for thinking than small talk and arrogance.

Flusser undoubtedly conveys an important reflection on yoga and philosophy, especially for taking it strictly as a practice, without resorting or sticking to the religious aura. He not only includes yogic meditation in the work in which he discusses the guidelines of Western Philosophy and the essence of language, but shows, in an unprecedented way, the locus of this experience in the construction of his thinking.

Returning to the dynamics between the philosopher's spiritual background and his essay, it is worth noting that in *On Doubt* Flusser's appropriation of *dharana* leads him to reaffirm his oldest spiritual references, as if he were saying: I have my own cultural heritage. I accept the experience of yogic concentration and it brings me discernment, enthusiasm and even usefulness, but it is not the case of substituting one mode of spirituality for another. The philosopher does not revisit the theme of concentration when he moves forward in his chapters, but rather evokes Greek and Hebrew references<sup>20</sup>.

In sum, we highlight the presence / absence dynamics of the symbolic boundary between yoga and philosophy: despite the philosophical content of yoga, Brazilian yoga research is not developed in Philosophy programs. The Philosophical System and the Ethics of yoga appear more in Yoga training courses than philosophy professionals. The theme (yoga), the author (Flusser) and essay (*On Doubt*) are still on the sidelines in official philosophical disciplines. However, as we have seen, not every philosopher is limited to relying on one tradition silencing the importance of others.

## Yoga and Art

At the National Museum in New Delhi, India, where theoretically there should be a large exhibition of works on yoga, we find few with this theme. However, among them is the painting entitled: *Dakshina-Murti Shiva worshiped by devotees*, from the late 18th century<sup>(e)</sup>, which depicts the moment when Brahma's four sons arrive at Mount Kailash and ask Shiva to teach them the way to salvation. In this painting, from Tanjore, a mixed style from Mysore with paper on wood, Shiva is illustrated as an instructor of yoga, wisdom, music and fine arts. Below the throne where he sits, male figurines appear wearing trunks and turbans, explicitly practicing asanas.

<sup>(e)</sup> National Museum, New Delhi. *Dakshina-Murti Shiva worshipped by devotees*. Tanjore, Mysore mixed style, South India, late 18th century. Paper passed on wood, 46x36cm. Acc.No. 81.369.



Taking a leap to the West, in search of connections between yoga and art, at the height of the counterculture, in 1967, the Beatles released the album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band, on the cover of which the faces of four important yogis are stamped: Sri Mahavatar Babaji, Sri Lahiri Mahasaya (1828-1895), Yukteswar Giri (1855-1936), Sri Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952)<sup>21</sup>. However, it was not until June 9th, 2013 that the first major exhibition of art works on yoga appeared, entitled: Yoga: The Art of Transformation, at the Sackler Gallery, located in Washington DC<sup>(f)</sup>, which was later shown at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2014. The content was released later in a book<sup>(g)</sup>. The collection consisted of 10 photographs of the *Bahr al-Hayat*, a Persian book published around 1602, which illustrates yogic postures for meditation, and also sculptures, illustrated manuscripts, court paintings, others photographs, books and films borrowed from 25 museums and private collections from India, Europe and the United States.

Initiatives by the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF), in Sydney, Australia<sup>(h)</sup>, have provided the public with contemporary yoga exhibitions. In 2016, this art institution exhibited the works of Anna Philips, a New Zealander based in Australia, trained both in Visual Arts and yoga. A similar example, aiming to merge the experience of practicing hatha-yoga with the contemplation of works of art, takes place at the Brant Foundation, located in Connecticut, USA, which offers immersion in yoga & art experiences within its galleries<sup>(i)</sup>.

In databases that provide some free illustrations, such as rbgstock, Pixabay, Flickr, among others, photographs of human figures practicing asanas are being replaced by illustrations created by digital tools. The most stylized images are on sale at Shutterstock and Pinterest: they are illustrations of chakras, mandalas, asanas, mudras and cosmic scenarios. It is noteworthy that, in Society6, these artistic illustrations of yoga are classified as Yoga Art Prints, and there are even some, by the artist Huebucket, that portray animals practicing yoga<sup>(j)</sup>.

Other important manifestations worth mentioning involve the publication of books and articles on the subject. In 2011, the book *Art & Yoga: Kundalini Awakening In Everyday Life*<sup>22</sup> was published, with guidelines on how to produce art and practice yoga, combining both in the form of complementary practices. Franklin<sup>23,24</sup> published two academic texts, the first on art yoga and the creative process, the second on contemplative approaches to art therapy, incorporating the traditions of Hindu and Tantric yoga, as well as Buddhism, into clinical and yogic practice.

In Brazil, there are still no explicit manifestations that combine yoga and art in museums and art galleries, even though yoga is metaphorically called "the art of living" and "the ancient art". In 2017, Nunes published the book "*Yoga, Arte e Liberdade*"<sup>25</sup>, and expresses the following:

Nowadays I see yoga as art too. Art of making the person recognize the beauty in himself. And as resistance. Resistance to a disenchanting view of life. Art and yoga go together, fulfilling very similar personal, social and sacred functions<sup>25</sup>. (p. 19)

<sup>(f)</sup> The World's First Exhibition on Yoga in Art. Available from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/multimedia/the-worlds-first-exhibition-on-Yoga-in-art-photos-99277116/>

<sup>(g)</sup> Yoga: the art of transformation. Smithsonian Libraries. Available from: [https://www.si.edu/object/siris\\_sil\\_1015031](https://www.si.edu/object/siris_sil_1015031)

<sup>(h)</sup> Yoga@The Gallery. Available from: <http://sherman-scaf.org.au/idea/Yoga-scaf/>

<sup>(i)</sup> Cocker Spaniel Yoga. Available from: <https://society6.com/s?q=Cocker%20Spaniel%20Yoga&context=Cocker%20Spaniel%20Yoga>

<sup>(j)</sup> Cocker Spaniel Yoga. Disponível em: <https://society6.com/s?q=Cocker%20Spaniel%20Yoga&context=Cocker%20Spaniel%20Yoga>





We agree with Nunes and quote the expression of the French thinker, yogi and painter, Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière, on the relationship between yoga and art, when he says:

Yogis are priests without an altar or, rather, they sustain the Temple of God directly; artists are equally priests who operate the mystical union, their mass is different, though. Just as the liturgy changes from one sect to another, in the same way they follow the ritual of music, painting or poetry, guided by their inspiration<sup>26</sup>. (p. 178, free translation)

Although yoga has not yet entered the national art galleries, interesting academic materials have been produced on the subject. A search of the CAPES dissertation and thesis database in April 2020 revealed the existence of 14 studies involving yoga, eight doctorates and six master's degrees, carried out between 2008 and 2019, in the area of Performing Arts, Theater and Arts.

The fact that the actors and dancers are seeking yoga suggests that the elements of flexibility, concentration and meditation that the practice provides can play an important role in the scenic preparation of these professionals, and also add a spiritual element. It is possible that a new field of study is emerging, that of Yoga & Art, in which the borders are not yet clearly demarcated as in the hard sciences. However, the aforementioned examples point to the presence of relational processes that operate across institutions and contexts, allocating cognitive authority and material resources to their production and registration.

## Yoga in Education

Another area in which yoga has been applied with interesting and promising results is in Education. One aspect of this application in the children's area is called Educational Yoga and occurs in Rio de Janeiro, involving, besides psychomotricity, laughter yoga, dynamic meditations and relaxation techniques<sup>(k)</sup>. Meanwhile, a Unesp project teaches yoga to children in municipal schools in Bauru<sup>(l)</sup>, and there are reports from other schools that use yoga and meditation to increase their students' concentration<sup>27</sup>, as a resource to try to artificially control children's anxiety in schools, without medicalization<sup>28</sup>.

Ferreira-Vorkapic C. *et al.*<sup>29</sup> analyzed the evidence of yoga interventions on academic, cognitive and psychosocial benefits, such as psychological well-being, attention and memory. Barranco-Ruiz *et al.*<sup>30</sup> produced a systematic review of interventions based on mind-body therapies to improve Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which is one of the most common psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents. The results of both studies suggest, respectively, that there are effects of yogic interventions in schools on both the psychological level and cognitive function.

According to Khalsa and Butzer<sup>31</sup>, research on the effectiveness of applying yoga to improve mental, emotional, physical and behavioral characteristics in school settings is a recent, but growing, field of study. Furthermore, Piagentini and Camargo<sup>32</sup> found out how yoga improved the behavior, emotion, concentration, socialization and

<sup>(k)</sup> Portal Yoga Educação.  
Available from: <http://www.Yogaeduc.com.br/proposta>

<sup>(l)</sup> Projeto da Unesp ensina ioga para crianças de escolas municipais em Bauru. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAxQhcvEJZc>



problem-solving capacity of the researched students, as well as reduced the violent actions and behaviors of all of them. It should be noted that if sociology is committed to analyzing how the self is shaped by class differences and is produced across boundaries and differences, yoga from the perspective of education can play a role in the socialization of children and adolescents of different ethnicities, emphasizing the aspect of relationship in defining identity.

A search was carried out in the CAPES dissertation and thesis database in April 2020, in order to identify further studies on yoga and education in the national scenario. The findings are the following: there are 18 works involving yoga, defended in the area of Education; 13 are dissertations and five, theses, produced between the years 2000 and 2019. Among them, two studies, by the authors Soares and Tura, deal with scenic and visual arts, respectively. The interest in the application of yoga in Education encompasses not only the search for harmony of movements and body control, but also the search for the self, ethical principles and values.

### Yoga in Anthropology and Sociology

The search in Capes' dissertation and thesis database (April 2020) in the areas of Anthropology and Sociology related to yoga, yielded 14 works, four doctoral ones and 10 master's, produced between 1999 and 2018.

As it is impossible to comment on all the studies in this restricted space, we selected two papers that dialogue with the scope of this article. The first one is: *Yoga na Laje: Ganga deságua na Rocinha*<sup>33</sup>, which takes a critical look at public policies on security and culture, as well as on media narratives that, in a metaphorical way, expose the bodies of the residents of the community. This work ended up inspiring the *Treino na Laje* project, carried out in the Sabim community, located in the district of Capão Redondo, São Paulo<sup>34</sup>.

From Lamont & Molnár's perspective<sup>7</sup>, this agency is an attempt to dissolve institutionalized social differences, going beyond the symbolic boundaries that create conceptual distinctions. If symbolic boundaries separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and belonging, the practice of yoga may be serving as a tool to achieve this goal, with sessions in both the Rocinha and Capão Redondo communities.

The second work that draws attention is "An anthropology of uncertainties between biomedicine and the effectiveness of Yoga and meditation practices in SUS"<sup>35</sup> because it dialogues precisely with the insertion of yoga in the SUS, as previously mentioned. The study reveals a crossing of paradigms, a confrontation of knowledge and legitimacy between the health professionals themselves who work in the Basic Health Units (UBS), relegating the practice of yoga to the status of secondary care. Thus, it is clear that care, in addition to being circumscribed by medical hegemony, is crisscrossed by affirmations, tensions and ambiguities. The concept of boundaries is again applicable here, according to Lamont & Molnár<sup>7</sup>, because it captures the process of relating, both in the field of social and collective identity, as well as in the field of professions, science and knowledge. The boundaries that arise due to social and collective identity, in this study, reveal pressures to evaluate their own group positively (doctors), maintaining and



acquiring superiority over another group (other health professionals). Regarding the field of professions, the concept of boundaries is useful to understand how professions differed from each other, in this case the hierarchy of functions within a UBS and the empowerment of the physician<sup>36</sup>, and how the professions compete with each other concerning jurisdictional monopolies for the legitimacy of their specialized knowledge, thus constituting a system of professions in constant change.

## Final considerations

In this article we reflected upon how and in what sense yoga is a boundary object. We consider that a large part of the constituent elements of the relational processes associated to the symbolic boundaries identified by Lamont & Molnar concerns yoga. Firstly, by not being linked to a single specific field of knowledge, yoga forms multicultural contact zones, causing an exchange of knowledge and practices, linking areas of knowledge and professions, showing inter / transdisciplinarity. Secondly, yoga offered at the SUS breaks barriers between social classes and ethnic groups.

Yoga promotes body-mind health and discernment through the radical investigation of the being and nature of reality, dynamizing the social and collective identity of its practitioners. That said, presenting itself as a boundary object is due, in part, to the complexity of its definition and the multiple applications it serves.

Finally, yoga actors (teachers, students and institutions) multiply and negotiate with specific requirements and needs, such as public policies, academic curricula, standardization of services and teaching, appropriation of yoga by professional councils, sometimes competing for space, and on occasions cooperating.

### Authors' contributions

Both authors had actively participated in all stages of the manuscript preparation.

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O *yoga* partiu do Oriente e foi apropriado pelo Ocidente, transita entre a tradição e a pesquisa, intersecta a Ciência e a Religião, oscilando entre o profano e o sagrado. Vem deixando para trás a invisibilidade social para se tornar uma prática comum. Pode ser compreendido como escola filosófica e, ao mesmo tempo, uma prática mente-corpo reconhecida pela Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS) delineando, assim, zonas de contato e fronteiras simbólicas com vários campos do saber. Na contemporaneidade vem sendo discutido nas áreas das Ciências Sociais e Humanas. Este artigo ensaístico traz reflexões sobre como o *yoga* vem sendo abordado pelos campos da Saúde, Religião, Filosofia, Arte, Educação, Antropologia e Sociologia, e discute o desenvolvimento do *yoga* como objeto de fronteiras.

**Palavras-chave:** *Yoga*. Sistema filosófico do *yoga*. Fronteiras simbólicas. Práticas integrativas e complementares.

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El *yoga* partió de Oriente y fue apropiado por Occidente, transita entre la tradición y la investigación, realiza una intersección entre la ciencia y la religión, oscilando entre lo profano y lo sagrado. Ha dejado para atrás la invisibilidad social para convertirse en una práctica común. Puede comprenderse como escuela filosófica y, al mismo tiempo, una práctica mente-cuerpo reconocida por la Organización Mundial de la Salud, delineando de esa forma zonas de contacto y fronteras simbólicas con varios campos del saber. En la contemporaneidad se ha discutido en las áreas de las ciencias sociales y humanas. Este artículo ensayístico brinda reflexiones sobre cómo el *yoga* ha sido abordado por los campos de la salud, religión, filosofía, arte, educación, antropología y sociología y discute el desarrollo del *yoga* como objeto de fronteras.

**Palabras clave:** *Yoga*. Sistema filosófico del *yoga*. Fronteras simbólicas. Prácticas integradoras y complementarias.

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