

Gravity

Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing.

Stephen Hawking

Fear not the pain
Let its weight fall back into the earth
For heavy are the mountains
Heavy are the seas

Rilke

The gravitational waves from the very beginning of the universe have just recently been 'found' deep in space. These gravitational waves are the pulsing of the hitherto unseen heart of the universe. The resonance of its origin. It has taken the reflective surfaces of a thousand silvered mirrors to reveal gravity's presence. But our lives are testament to gravity. We are like a billion shining surfaces.

Wheresoever I look, without fear and with an open heart, always I find I am looking into the face of God. When I began to explore ideas of gravity I felt that I was connecting to something profound and beautiful that, since it was there always, had gone unnoticed. Yet this essence - I can call it gravity - permeates every part of my being. It has shaped me. Everything about me exists because of and is in relation to gravity. It was there at my beginning and will continue at my end.

Gravity is a name given to something that has no form and yet is in relationship with all form. The name gravity has its root in the latin *gravis* - meaning heaviness.

In the absence of gravity we become weightless, our bones lose their density and muscles atrophy. Gravity, or rather the absence of it in space allows us further to understand by studying the astronauts on the space station the subtle and not so subtle physiological effects of its presence. But I do not need a trip to a space station to appreciate gravity - a yoga mat will do!

The natural body has a deep understanding of the relationship with gravity for it embodies it totally. It is the very nature of embodiment. No matter how we may try to avoid it - with all that draws us heavily into the mental/spiritual realms, the body and gravity will always call us back. It is only when we are fully embodied can our soul have full expression. John O'Donahue describes in his *Anam Cara* (the Soul's Friend) how we have come to think, through a misunderstanding, of the lightness of our soul being inside in a body subject to gravity. He describes instead how it is the Soul which encapsulates and suffuses the body and that embodiment (and so gravity) is what allows it full expression. Gravity gives us both form and freedom.

How truly grateful I am for my teacher(s) and this practice of yoga that is awakening in me the capacity to work with gravity with greater awareness. Inhabiting so strongly the mental realm, like many others, I have habitually held my body in a way that works not with gravity but against it - holding my muscles in a permanent state of tension; holding myself together - and using quite unnecessary force to navigate my path in life - rather than allowing my weight to fall back into the earth.

We grow not in spite of gravity but in relation to it. We might appear to defy it with our uprightness yet it is the very source of our natural strength and its presence is eternal.

Working with gravity is to create a dynamic relationship within the body and is, for me, about an exploration of freedom. This is the freedom that comes with the movement from a forced way of being to the state of dynamic relaxation that arises with the discovery of our natural relationship with gravity. This is a connection to the deep knowing that the body holds within it.

The shoot that rises up in seeming defiance of gravity is yet nourished by the root that grows with it. It is, like us, in a dynamic relationship with gravity. By going with the downward force the momentum is created for its upward thrust - a thrust so strong it can break through hard ground. We can learn much from the seedling.

My feet and toes can be like roots. By waking up my feet and letting them soften and open, by allowing the surface muscles my body to soften and fall about me like a cloak to the ground then, like the seedling, I can work with this force of nature that is gravity. There is a point where this yielding to gravity reaches a point where the smallest gathering together of the arch of my foot creates a response that rises up, awakening my spine so that I experience the deep joy and exhilaration of the upward thrust of energy that exists only in relation to gravity. Any part of me that yields to the gravity becomes my root so that the subtlest of movement releases this rush of pure energy experienced at the very heart of my being.

This is energy that grows me, gives me a lightness in my step and grace in my movements. When I rest I can fall back into gravity's arms knowing with the deepest trust that it will keep me close. Gravity can be so utterly relied upon. We might never even give gravity a thought and still it will work its magic upon us.