

PHILOSOPHY 101 - FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Essay Question:

Read Lines II.34 and II.35 from chapter two of the Yoga Sutra's of Patanjali. Summarize, in your own words, the meaning of these sutras. Explain how they can be used in your life, with people you find difficult, in your practice and in teaching your students.

Sutra 2.34

Sutra 2.34 says that everybody has the potential to blindly (or not so blindly) wish or perpetuate harm to itself and to others, may that harm be small or big. Such actions arise often from egoistic feelings such as greed, anger and assumption. They are a consequence of a very strong sense of "I" and also a sense of identification with "being right" or "having the right to" upon others. This results in being trapped in a very closed view of the world where the "I-person" dominates in its mind the other by clinging to be more valuable than the other. "I worth more than you" "I am right and not you" "I have the right to [hurt, steel, judge, condemn] you". This way of obtaining what we want (an immediate and thus volatile reward) at the expense of the other, this indulgence towards ourselves to perpetuate unwholesome thoughts or acts and this clinging to the sense of importance, prevent a person to see what happen on a bigger scale (in the other and in a situation at large) and the contribution she/he is bringing to it. Thoughts are at the base of a person's actions and have the power to feed situations, relations, communities and societies. Unwholesome thoughts will most likely generate suffering and wholesome thoughts are more inclined to generate a climate that is nourishing.

Sutra 2.35

Being grounded in non-violence represents an active choice rooted in a certain clarity of seeing the world as a whole and of putting aside the sense of self-importance. It creates a space of silence (free of mental chattering, assumptions or judgments) useful to welcome the other as he/she is. It means, at first, that a person has to know itself clearly enough to differentiate its intentions, needs and limits, that she/he can be responsible for itself and that she/he is able to apply non-violence towards itself. Secondly, it implies that the person is in a place of curiosity, openness, recognition and acceptance towards the other that leads to a real capacity

to listen to him/her. Both the restraint of the mental chatters and judgments and the offering of a generous landing space of acknowledgment create a safe place appropriate to diffuse hostility in people.

How the previous Sutras can be used in my life, with people that I find difficult, in my practice and in my teaching to students.

Since my childhood I developed several strategies of protections and perpetuated them unconsciously for years. These strategies and many patterns of thinking I built through time, in relation to pain, sadness, injustice, violence and anger I had experienced, where the best ways of coping I had, considering the resources I had. It was protection, survival. It was also seclusion from many kind of relationship. That brought me to spiral of basic needs not met, to isolation from others, to basic needs even less met and so on. In this dryness, I couldn't find my worth and wholesome thoughts where perfect strangers to me. With time, though, through years of personal work, meaningful readings, therapies, travels, trainings, yoga, meditation and beneficial encounters, I could dig deep inside myself to unravel the confusion that was dwelling there and I started applying salutary strategies and I developed healthy rewiring of my ways of thinking.

I can relate a lot of my journey to the sutras chosen above. They correspond, to me, to the path of wholesome participation to life, of accountability towards myself and towards others and to the continual learning and practicing of *vairāgya*, non-reaction.

Until now, I think people I find difficult are one of the biggest challenge to me. I developed the habit of withdrawing quickly myself from people I feel uncomfortable with. And they can be many. I think it is due to the importance I spontaneously give people towards me. It has to do with my need to be loved, which is not yet totally clear to me, and some low self-esteem and insecurity. The power I give to people, the insecurity and the low self-esteem all correspond to delusion and to *avidyā*. It is me not seeing things as they are; me as I am, and people as they are. It is me putting prejudiced filters between me and others. It is the result of unwholesome thoughts I have towards my-self and that I transmit to others through projections. Working on applying and nourishing non-violence and wholesome thoughts towards me on an everyday, yet an every moment basis is, I think the more strong and sustainable attitude I can adopt. The more I learn to do it for myself, the more I can offer it to others. I am still working on the nuances of healthy boundaries that are premises to set a compassionate yet not invasive place to the other.

Regarding my practice, I think the most obvious way I could make a wise use of these sutras is, concerning my perfectionism (that addresses again my low self-esteem), a behavior I developed to gain a sense of recognition and of self-value from

others. I started yoga with an erroneous sense of me and my goal was to be perfect. To be good enough, I had to be able to accomplish all the poses regardless of where I was and where my body was. Of course I wasn't able, so I pushed my body way too far, way too many times, until obviously, I injured myself. That was me being unwholesome and violent with myself. But from that point I started to learn. I learned to observe, to refrain myself from judging my capacities, to accept where I was, to take care of my injuries and not to push so hard on me. With time, all those more wholesome attitudes brought me to be more playful in my practice, to relax, to be more friendly and to adopt the amazing and fulfilling lens of curiosity. It is still a moment to moment practice.

Teaching to students. Students are others. Teaching is transmitting the knowledge and the wisdom that I comprehend and inhabit. To is the relationship between me, my knowledge, the students and their universe. It is a lot.

I see teaching as an intimate sharing, a place of vulnerability and strength. As I see yoga classes as a space where people come to get in touch with themselves and perhaps let themselves be exposed. I consider crucial to work with a minding rooted in non-violence. I want to apply it on a physical level like: Constructing sequences that are intelligent for the body, giving people choice among different steps to get into a peak pose and educating people to find the limits of their own body and to become responsible for the choice their making. As well as on a more psychological level: Practicing myself non-violence, incorporating time for self-reflection in a class, introducing concepts related to the sutras to meditate on or just to spark the attention of student so they can bring some of what caught their attention home. Practically, I think that it is with self-observation and honesty that I'll be able to walk that path. I will surely catch myself having unwholesome thoughts in regards to my teaching or my students or even my colleagues, but instead of feeding it, I'll have the choice; to stop, look into myself, find the need that isn't being met behind my feeling, acknowledge and honor my truth and then adapt and address it to the concerned person, might that be me or another.