

Morten Tolboll

Sûnyatâ Sûtras

My blog (www.mortentolboll.blogspot.com) consists of what I call Sûnyatâ Sûtras. In my book [Sûnyatâ Sûtras](#) (free download) I have published a collection of them.

What does “Sûnyatâ” mean?

The Mādhyamika philosopher Nagarjuna said, that the Now’s lawfulness around the function of a universal negation-power, is due to, that energy works as streams and dividings within a superior wholeness. And because the wholeness is a reality, each part will always fit into a correspondent part. Firstly, this means, that each part only can be understood in relation to its negation; that is: what the part *not* is. This implies, that each part comes to appear as part of a polarization-pair, or a pair of opposites – like in the teaching of Yin and Yang. In that way Nagarjuna’s philosophy advocates a kind of dualism *if* we shall use our thinking and language in an unambiguous way. Secondly, it implies, that each part only can be understood in relation to *everything* else; that is: in relation to the wholeness.

So, the more you, through the Ego’s evaluations, isolate these parts from each other, the more the abandoned parts will work stronger and stronger on their polar partners. Therefore, these polar partners, in their extremes, finally will switch over in the opposite extreme. Another aspect of this lawfulness, or another way to describe this lawfulness is: energy returns to its starting point. This is also called compensatory karma, and the lawfulness works as wave movements and pendulum movements.

And since everything in this way only work correlative, yes, then Nagarjuna claimed, that we actually can’t say anything about the wholeness, only dualistic about the parts. In that way, Nagarjuna denies, that there is any position taken, maintaining that his critical arguments are simply reductions to absurdity of views his opponents hold and that he has no view of his own.

Therefore, he called the wholeness the Emptiness (*’sûnyatâ*) – a teaching, which had one quite determinate purpose: the neutralization of all the dogmas, theories and viewpoints, which ignorance has created.

The concept of emptiness refers to the intuitive experience of reality, that all inner and outer phenomena are devoid of independent existence and form of being. What they can be said to be, they can only be said to be in relation to something else, a complementary thing and vice versa. In that way, they are nothing by virtue of themselves, and therefore nothing by virtue of something else either, etc. They are insubstantial, or as Nagarjuna calls it: codependent originated (everything that exists does so dependently on other things) (*pratityasamutpanna*). In absolute sense, nothing exists independently, eternally or unchangeable. All existence is impermanent; everything that exists is transitory, lasting only a moment.

But this doesn't mean, that Nagarjuna is an advocate of the absolute non-existence of things. Non-existence means namely neither negation nor opposition to existence. Therefore, also non-existence is, as everything else, correlative.

Codependent origination is what Nagarjuna calls emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The creation of things, images and concepts ends in the emptiness. And by trying to reveal the unreality of the relative, conventional world, you can reach the absolute reality, which is lying in this emptiness. The emptiness is in that way the inexpressible (Nirvana). Because Nirvana is lying in the revelation of the unreality (Samsara), then Nirvana and Samsara is not at all different.

I have in my six books shown, that the spiritual practice contains three important concepts:

1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others - see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#), which is a manual in critical thinking - free download).

2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego - see my articles [The Emotional Painbody and why Psychotherapy can't Heal it](#), [The Ego-inflation in the New Age and Self-help Environment](#), and [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#)).

3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images).

Where the six books mainly are focusing on 1 and 2, then the Sutras on this blog, in accordance with the above-mentioned description, are entirely focusing on 3.

And, what does "Sutra" mean then?

The oldest form of spiritual scriptures, as for example the old Indian Sutras, are intended for meditative reading. Sutras are effective hints to the truth in form of aphorisms or short expressions with a limited conceptual elaboration.

Just like the words of Buddha, the Vedas and the Upanishads belong to the early holy teachings written down in form of Sutras. The words and parables of Jesus can, when taken out of the stories, also be regarded as Sutras, as well as the deep teaching contained in Tao Te King, the old Chinese Book of Wisdom, written by the philosopher Lao Tzu.

In meditative reading it is important to understand, that the answers in the texts aren't conclusions to anything, but exclusively tools for your own self-inquiry. This means, that they are a help finding your questions/problems' implicit *philosophical questions*, and investigating them in a meditative-existential way.

As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein says in his *Tractatus*, then the words only are a ladder, which you can use to rise above them. Afterwards you throw it away. In the same way, they say in Zen, that the words only are a finger pointing at the moon. You shall never confuse the finger with the moon.

That, whereof you can't speak, about that you must be silent. But then you precisely have entered into the wordless silence.

The texts are worked out in a way, so that they can be read independently of each other. This means, that there are coming some repetitions. But when you practice meditative reading, you don't read primarily to get new information, but in order to enter into another state of consciousness when you read - which means, that you as a reader, rather than evaluating, are trying to relate neutral to what you read. You take a mental step backwards, and observe yourself and what is happening. You so to speak use the text as a mirror, in which you discover yourself. This is the reason why you can read the same many times, and still feel that it is fresh and new every time.

The meaning is, that you shall read the texts slowly. Many times, you may want to take a break and give place to a moment of reflection or silence. At other times, you may open the book on a casual place and read some lines. You can also try to see the texts in relation to each other. If you for example are engaged by a problem that one of the texts is about, it can be, that the problem is made even more clear by seeing it in relation to other texts. Take for example the philosophical question *Who am I?* You will soon find out, that this philosophical question becomes more and more clarified in the other texts.

This question recurs in other words in all philosophical questions. A philosophical inquiry will always in the end be a self-inquiry, regardless of what the philosophical question is about. Because who is it who puts the question, and who is it who examines the question?

If you work with the texts in this way you will discover, that you are being taught from a deeper layer in you, from your being in the Now, from life itself, yes, from the Source itself. You will be trained in seeing your personal problems from questions common to all mankind, and to see these in relation to each other. You are in action with a real philosophical inquiry, which opens your consciousness in towards the Source.

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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