

HOW LONG DO THINGS LAST?

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Every idea since time immemorial, every invention and book idea, not to mention every last thought came from the mind. By itself that should be enough to point out to us that the mind is a treasure trove, if only we know how to mine it. The Buddhists call the mind the “wish-fulfilling gem,” which is totally telling, if we think about it.

And every once in a while, each of us manages to find a good idea or two in the mind. Yet, it seldom occurs to us that the mind is evergreen, and always fertile. And it would seem that few deliberately set about to mine it.

Modern etymologists point out that the word religion comes from the Latin ‘re-ligare’, to bind or to re-connect. The Sanskrit word ‘dharma’ is sometimes translated as religion or law, it being the specific methods to enlightenment that the Buddha pointed out. In fact, the Buddha said there are 84,000 dharmas or ways of liberation. We each need to find the one that works for us. One size does not fit all.

We could argue whether Buddhism is really a religion, since it is in essence just a methodology for enlightenment, and has no cosmogenesis, is non-theist, and so on. But we perhaps could agree that religions (and Buddhism) are concerned with what is true, with what lasts.

And by “last,” we mean what lasts longest. As the Christian Bible so elegantly says, everything comes to pass, not to stay. How long things stay (including truths and ideas) depends on how long they last, how true they are. And common sense tells us that what is made well lasts longest.

“True,” “truth,” “truths,” such important concepts.

In this phantasmagoric world we wander in, reaching for a touchstone, for something that lasts and that we can hang onto is not always easy. Truths are like the fixed stars. They have different magnitudes and colorings. As things fade, and they all eventually do, only those truths last which are, of course, most true. These are the pole stars in the general direction of our life. All else fades.

We pilot our ship of life and set our sails by whatever we consider (and can see) as true, the brightest lights in our personal sky. We head for them.

If you have ever seen the Milky Way (our galaxy) on a dark night, stretching as it does almost vertically in the sky above, then you know by experience that there are not only pole stars and constellations, by vast clusters of stars that are of one group, one mind. There is no lack of light in the universe.

And so it is with our inner universe. The mind is ablaze with light if we will look. And as the Buddhists point out, even the light of one match can end the darkness of eons.

As for myself, I have seen the Milky Way stretched across the night sky, marked by the planets wandering through it. But I also have had the very good fortune of being instructed on how to look into the mind itself, how to catch at least a glimpse of the actual nature of that mind.

“As above, so below” is the old hermetic axiom.

We might add that what we see outside is what we project from inside, and were we to not only look outside in life for truth, but also turn our gaze within, we would find that same Milky Way of light reflected inside as well. In fact, we would also realize that the outer is the reflection of the inner, and not vice versa.

I mean: there is light in there.

If the mind is like an ocean, let's not spend all of our time in the shallows.