

Talk or truth

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Socrates, in the Theaetetus (c369 BCE), seeks to define **knowledge**. His interlocutor gives a number of examples, but Socrates characteristically reveals the irony of his answer: “My word, you are generous Theaetetus; so openhanded that, when asked for a single thing, you produce instead a whole variety.” (Theaetetus 146d).

“My question, Theaetetus, was not ‘What are the objects of knowledge?’ nor ‘How many kinds of knowledge are there?’ We were not trying to count them, but to find out what knowledge (the thing itself) really is.” (Theaetetus 146e)

Talk religion

Most of religion today is **talk**. The masters of religion—theologians, priests, gurus and talkers—attempt to define into reality some ideas of **the** supreme Being, eternal Buddhas and cosmic Bodhisattvas. Then, to capture the attention and lives of the unwary, gullible and lost, they use **memes** (self-replicators), such as buildings, rituals, uniforms and hierarchy to guise themselves with the façade of power and goodness that they lack.

Like Theaetetus, religions present **memes and examples** of themselves. They are merely speaking **of** religion, instead of **speaking** religion (as if we need it). In the Theaetetus, Socrates rejects this response, arguing that, for any X, examples of X are neither necessary nor sufficient for a definition of X. They are not necessary because they are irrelevant. They are not sufficient because none of the speakers or God have really met God (if they claim they have, then, we have a much bigger psychological problem!).

What “I” really is

Most of the things we hear again and again about religion (including Buddhism) are not relevant to knowledge or life, and are often detrimental to natural goodness. God-believers put **god** first instead of investigating what the world or life really is.

Buddhists are also in danger of irrelevance when we ritualize the Buddha’s **teachings** instead of investigating what they really **are**, what the Buddha really teaches and experiencing for ourself.

Even more vital: we need to seek to understand **not** what “I” **am**, but what the I really **is** or is **not**.

Spirituality

The spirituality of **truth** is always a personal quest like breathing our life. We may listen to the inspirations of others who **know** what they are saying that benefits us wholesomely. We can **feel** that very same experience or get some hint of it in our own heart or quest.

Hence, we reject vampiric memes and seek to empty ourself of self-replicating, of fixing and hardening our ideas of self and self-centredness. We see ourself like a little white cloud merging into a sky of beautiful clouds giving shade to the world, bring timely rain and giving way to the sun's nurturing light.

Irrelevance

Instead of a quest to seek memes to identify with, we see and understand the “self” as our own **mind** that is the true creator of our world and vision. Hence, we become aware of how we can easily trick ourself with coloured lenses, and claim (rightly for ourself indeed) that the world we have created is coloured as we see it. The reality is that deep within we **doubt** ourself.

In other words, we often speak **about** something without really having experienced it. We speak **of** Buddhism as if we are awakened or have understood the suttas or have tasted the joy of meditation. Hence, we are simply peddling **irrelevance** as our religious programme. Such irrelevance also betrays that our real interests may be something else: like **using** religion for worldly purposes by exploiting the faith of the crowds.

Crowd control

After all, Religion is for the **crowd**; just as royalty and politicians thrive on crowds, depend on numbers and manyness, religion needs crowds. **Spirituality** is a personal matter: only we can really help ourself, and so be our own master. The more spiritual individuals there are in a society, the better the chance of more persons growing out of the crowded cyclic life.

Then, we really begin to **think**: the crowd does not think, it only follows to the end, its own end. When we look within, we begin to really **feel**, directly experience life. The crowd does not feel, it only seeks safety in numbers to be counted in tribes and flocks, like sheep, fish and crops to be harvested. But for whose good? For the good of the Harvesters!

Leaving the crowd

The Buddha stood up alone in his society of Crowd Religion and crowdedness. He renounced crowdedness which both pleasure and pain burden us with. Leaving the crowd, the world, he found himself, his true “self,” to be mind-made, self-constructed. He awakens to self-knowledge, and thus speaks from direct experience. Hence, his teachings are more relevant today than ever. This is the path he has opened up for us to walk ourself to self-discovery and self-awakening.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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