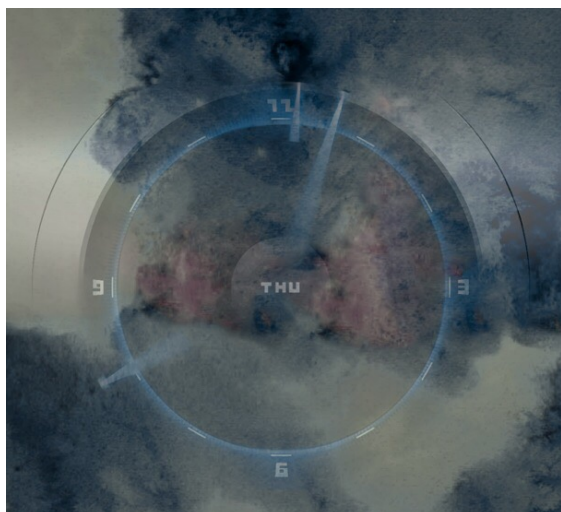


Time

(By Bhikkhu Dhammānanda)



Most people never have enough time, rarely have a good time and in general time seems to be something that works usually rather against them.

A person working on a spiritual path can not get around the problem of time...acquiring more control over one's life means also acquiring more control over time...

For getting a handle on the problem of time, we have to acquire a new way of considering about time. 'Objective' time as we inherit it from science and culture is not likely to change according to our needs. Yet, there is the possibility of alongside with 'objective' time to also consider about time subjectively...and thus widening one's possibilities in life.

For the person who works on a spiritual path...the primary task will be to make the inside grow,...consciousness (of one's path) and conscience has to slowly acquire dominion over sense impressions and a mere sensory existence...and with that, change has to occur from a time concept emphasising the importance of the externals, towards a time concept emphasising the importance of the internals.

Centres of gravity

The earth takes approximately 365 days to circle around the sun, the moon takes around 27 days for its rotation around the earth and it takes about 24 hours for the earth to rotate around its own axis,...These are the measuring rods which we have learnt to use to calculate time.

But a meditator who seeks to develop a centre of gravity within himself, who seeks to become celestial himself,...will find these time-considerations less and less appropriate. So he seeks out more appropriate ways of measuring his time.

When we feel far removed from our own centre of gravity, time becomes more and more a burden. Our nights of gloomy mood become longer and longer, while our happy days are rarer.

While on the other hand side, as we move closer towards our own centre of gravity, we find our days are becoming brighter and our dark moods become shorter.

As we rotatingly move on our orbit of life, whenever we feel it is our daylight hour, we should see around what can be done to improve the conditions of life...and whenever we perceive our sunlight to go down, we should be more still and restful, and when we have to move about, be more careful and attentive.

Time in observation

Time highly depends on the relation of an observer towards a particular object.

Our personal sense of the passage of time does not depend on "clock time," but results from the activity of the senses and the mind.

In technical terms we can say, time depends both on the object of cognition (/the object attended to) (...object condition -arammana paccaya), as well as on the cognising consciousness with its mental apparatus (faculty condition - indriya paccaya)

...If the cognised object is an unfamiliar object and the cognising consciousness arises with a mental apparatus of low quality (without wisdom-faculty, without energy, ...clear comprehension, ...malleability, tranquility of mind etc.) ,...then the time required to process that object will be long

...If on the other hand the cognised object is a familiar object (perhaps previously understood) and the cognising consciousness arising with a mental apparatus of higher quality (with wisdom faculty etc.), ..the time required to process that object will be shorter.¹

For an ordinary person, identified with an object, a person delighting in an object, a person with avijja...every experience will always have some time component to it ...either extending into the past or into the future (memory or anticipation)....but for a person on the spiritual path, any act of cognition that is in line with that path, will be an act of eternal value.

¹ Ease in regard to any object comes, if there is knowledge in regard to that object,...hence the importance of classification systems (that include both outer and inner phenomena) and/or knowledge gained through instructions

Slowing down time

By giving the mind an agreeable object it is familiar with...time itself can be slowed down due to increase in presence.

The more presence there is, the slower the flow of time moves towards some potential future position as well as the lesser the mind will seek to draw similarities from the past.

On the other hand side, an unfamiliar, disagreeable object requires more mental application as well as more time to process; thus the mind will search for similarity in the past as well as for more ease in the future.

Modern Science, Meditation and Time

Nowadays both in east and west the western scientific model has widely asserted itself, so in order to be taken seriously in any attempt to establish a new (although perhaps it is not all that new at all, but very ancient), more spiritual conception of time one has to make use, (.../base oneself on) or prove some understanding of the western scientific model with its conceptions of space and time...

The success of such an attempt will be proven only when it starts being used by people for more sublime and spiritual acts of magic than those brought about by the application of the western scientific model as it is used now. So here only a short attempt of it:

When observer and an observed object travel with the same speed²...no experience of time comes about...the object is just present³...when an observed object passes by an observer with greater speed, in the same direction,...an assumption of future comes about (the object ahead of the observer, is at a potential future position in regard to the observer⁴). When an object moves in the oppo-

² Or vibrate with the same frequency

³ F.ex. The mind is speedy and quick witted and the object or in this case the situation is a fast changing one...

A more concrete example...

A sports event,..for example a basketball game...if it is observed by an observer who knows the rules and the game very well (his mind can acquire the speed of the object),...and whose mind when watching is clear, sharp and filled with interest in the game ...then there will be no experience of time
...if the same event is watched by a person who knows the game either little or not at all (the mind can not acquire the same speed as the object), and who has little or no interest in the game,...for that person, time will move slowly

⁴ in the case of the game, the hoped for ending of the game will be projected into the future

site direction of that of an observer,...a consideration of the past comes about⁵...

In meditation one can consider along a similar line, that is, when a person (the observer) is very identified with the body, things like the subtler forms of breathing may be many times too fast to catch, leave alone catching wholesome emotions or the mind. So the mind may seek out strategies as to how to catch the breath better in the future or look into the past as to whether there were any previous experiences that relate to the breathing condition now. But with skill and experience, off and on, a person may be able to bring his body more into alignment with his breathing. Thus body (as the main identity of the observer) and breathing become more aligned and with it changes the time-perception, that is, a person becomes more aware of the present. With a repeated experience of that, a person (the observer) will cease to overly identify himself with the body, and starts to become more identified with the perception of alignment and harmony. With that in turn, it will become again easier to catch up with the object of attention because the observer now starts to move in the same direction as the object of attention.

⁵ past events related in general or to the specifics of the situation will arise in the mind...in the case of the game, perhaps something like 'I never liked these sorts of games'

...of course in general one might say, that the mind will just take a different object, but in this present scenario we are considering about the relation of one observer with a specific object and how that relates to time

Spiritual Time

There are mind-objects of an higher order, which due to their simplicity, agreeableness and suitability to a certain person, operate on a higher time-scale...(if there is less resistance on the level of space, there will be less resistance on the level of time...the experience of time will be more flowing (more malleable), rather than resisting.⁶

If things are processed not in line with a spiritual path (suffering and the end of suffering), but only in line with their perceived (intrinsic) qualities ...there will be no progress, time will be cyclic,...ie. it will repeat itself in the future. But if it is processed in line with a spiritual path, with every processing of an object (experience), a positive modification of the past, present and future can come about.⁷

If all objects of past, present and future are rightly processed with wisdom (understanding their impermanent, suffering, non-self characteristic etc.), then the mind rises up, beyond the constraints (/confines) of time.

⁶ in order to cultivate experiences of time surpassing those common to the physical world, a person usually has to build up a certain relationship with a certain object he can easily harmonise with

⁷ Positive times can be extended through training, negative times can be diminished through training.

Plane-Time-Calculations

Calculations of time ...will depend on the sphere of attention...A person starting some business, if he is intelligent, he may not expect immediate profit, but might expect making some profit perhaps only after a few years. Of course, he will almost certainly not calculate over periods of life-times...

On the other hand to a person embarking on a path that at least concerns itself with purifying the mind,...making it good...most religious systems will suggest making calculations that extent beyond this lifetime.⁸

Still further along that line, a Yogi or any person aiming at a superhuman state or experience won't be well advised to calculate for it in matters of human conditioning or human time, but needs to first acquire a more spacious time considering.

Then, beyond that, in order to sanely make calculations solely based on ones state of consciousness NOW,...one will have to have a huge amount of good kamma in stock...but this will be the path to the ending of time.⁹

⁸ hence also the need for greater intelligence and foresight

...in practice this might mean f.ex. asking oneself questions such as...how should I act, speak and think...what should I do to get a favourable rebirth (.../to go to heaven, .../to not go to hell)?

...it also means, not giving easily up ones virtues, determinations and vows, even if not any immediate good results seem to spring from them

⁹ ...if the mind understands that life is flowing in the right direction,...then automatically it will be in the now

Learning and Time in relation to the different parts of man

On the physical level, everything is slow ...if you want to learn something, you will require continuous input from the outside...and you can learn only one item at a time...on the level of emotions (f.ex. learning s.th. with interest)...memory lasts longer,...and the mind learns to connect thingsmore is seen in a learned item,...thus more is learned at a time ...On the level of the mind, again time will work differently. What has come in contact with the mind, is learned (retained) and will take a long time to fade...it will immediately connect with anything related (far or near/closely or otherwise) ...one item learned will immediately break of into its details and subtleties...thus learning one thing, one may come to know a great many things...On the level of consciousness ...past and future of an item may be immediately seen...its history, its way of coming about, as well as its possible progression into the future.

Shrinking time

Sometimes in life you might have not too much of a good time...if at such time you can shrink time a little...it will be very helpful...

The proper way to shrink the time is by putting the mind in touch with an object or element which is under a different set of laws then the 5 sensory world...thus a non-sensual object (such as the energy flowing in your body)...as the resistance in space ceases, so the resistance in time will cease...Time becoming more spacious.

Time on the Path

Ordinary human beings arrange their time according to minutes, hours, weeks, months etc...this is how society is ordering itself...but the yogi following the light within, for any of his undertakings discerns the right moment...doing thus he is freed from conventional time with all its complications.

Time and planes of existence

In order to get some direct perception of the idea of time...and how time is effected by our own state of consciousness...the Abhidhamma model offers a hierarchy of planes of existence...from the very lowest of planes, the plane of hell, up to the very highest of planes of the formless gods...giving to each some very definite time value of the lifespan of those beings.

Here I am not going to give those bizarre numbers, that those texts give us...but indicate only by the extent of the sphere, the extent of time in relation to the rest.

Non-sensual Gods of Superior Mind-power (of the abstract mind)

Non-sensual Gods of Superior Mind-power (of the concrete mind)

Gods who wield certain powers over the sensual world as well as possessing greater sensual prosperity and happiness

Realm of ordinary human beings

Animals

Realm of Ghosts

Realm of Demons, Anti-Gods, who feed on the suffering of other beings

Realm of beings in hell

Now such model can be very valuable, if one learns to recognise the characteristics of those gods and lower beings within oneself as well as in others.

The more one knows (and the more experience one has), the greater ones possibility to change certain things.

As an example, one could pay attention to ones time-perception in different circumstances...such as when doing ordinary human work, when doing work of a less ordinary type (f.ex. mental work), or when allowing the mind to roll in some nonsensical wandering thought, in contrast to, when using or applying the mind...when rushing through life chased by some perpetual thought... or when bringing the mind in contact again with the lower realms of matter and unfinished kamma...making it enter the world of ones body...

For getting out of the laws of the human realm, one has to find ways to develop states of consciousness corresponding to those beings of an higher order.¹⁰

If you can't find suitable conditions for your practice in space, you may look for them in time...understanding some of the laws of time, a person acquires the possibility to work more skilfully on causes...channeling his efforts into more promising directions rather than fighting only with immediate circumstances in the surrounding space.

¹⁰ Never will one get out of the laws of the human realm by means of politics