

CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
February 29, 1984
PB PARAS; PHILOSOPHY

TOPIC: PB Paras

SUBJECT: Philosophy

SUBSUBJECTS: PB anecdotes, Sage

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BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Paul Brunton, *Notebooks*. 16 vols; Vol. 1 entitled *Perspectives*.

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: III.1.8

NOTES:

- Anecdotes about PB throughout transcript highlighted in yellow.
- Anthony does not speak at all on Tape 1, although a few PB anecdotes are transcribed for completeness. Anthony makes a few remarks on Tape 2. Only those PB quotes that are pertinent to the discussion are transcribed.
- Earlier transcript versions exist.

TRANSCRIBED from Audio Cassette Tapes by HP, JF et al. in 1993 as part of the set for *Living Wisdom*. V11 version 2018. Reformatted from V11 version by JRM & JF 2019-2020, with Subheads and Table of Contents added by JRM. In 2024, IT updates prefatory matter and footer, replaces tape markers with audio file markers, adds Subsubjects, alters some Subheads to make more accurate, adds Plotinus quotes section, corrects typos/errors, adds new note within transcript, reformats to accord with new conventions. **Readable edited transcript – V14.1r.**

AUDIO FILES: 1984 0229a, 1984 0229b. [Note: “Tape” and “Side” refer to original audio cassette tapes that were later digitized into .MP3 Audio Files.]

1984 02/29 at Wisdom's Goldenrod
PB Paras; Philosophy
Readable Edited Transcript

PHILOSOPHY DEMANDS JUSTICE

[Audio File 1984 0229a Begins]

(24½ minutes into Audio File)

RC: Well, to make it as positive as possible, I think that passage from Plotinus was quoted several times, about how the soul is free when it acts according to reason its guide, but it's not when it's passive to circumstances. And he says that the good soul usually leaves things a little bit better than they were before. He's not completely dictated to by circumstance . . . (inaudible). [Note: See Plotinus, III.1.8, last para.]

Like PB lots of times--people who worked around PB--would make a mistake. It was obviously something that, if you had given him his choice, he probably would have preferred that didn't happen. But then he would immediately take that as part of the raw material and build it into something that was as positive as you could get out of that kind of input.

(2 min.)

RC: He gave an example too--actually it was a very drastic example--PB was talking about war, how there may be times when you have to go to war. And we were talking about pacifism, and how in general, philosophy really doesn't have much use for pacifism. We read some quotes about that, and justice. Philosophy demands justice. Justice usually requires force, so philosophy has no use for pacifism. He was talking about what the ideal is in that circumstance, you may have to go to war, and you may have to kill, but you don't have to hate. And you don't have to get filled with passion. You just have to DO what it is that needs to be done. Mastering a certain event, not that you change it, but for you it's an entirely different event. Mastering it in the sense of knowing how to do it properly, how to bring forth the latent resources, making things positive as quickly as possible.

(12 min.)

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1984 0229a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

(approx. 5 min.)

RC: . . . There was one time--actually the first time that I went out with PB--he wanted to buy some shoelaces, some stretch shoelaces, because he didn't like to have to tie them all the time, he wanted to be able to slip his feet in, and slip the shoe off, and not have to tie and untie. So we went into this one place, and he asked the fellow, the clerk there, did they have these elastic shoelaces. And he said, "Yes, we only have two kinds"--the man was really busy. "There's this whole rack of shoelaces over here, and we only have two kinds of elastic--this one and this one--take whichever one you want." And then he went away and was busy with the customers that were looking at different kinds of shoes. So PB didn't want to buy one unless he was sure that it was elastic, so he says, "Well, we have to open it up." And PB says, if it's elastic, then we'll buy it. And I could already tell it was loaded. (laughter). Because, sure enough, it

wasn't elastic. And the next thing PB said, "You have to make that man realize that he did the wrong thing." (laughter) "Don't let him get away with this. I could have given him my money, and walked out of here, and I wouldn't have had what I wanted." So anyway it led into this scene where this fellow and I were standing nose to nose, yelling at each other in French, and PB's standing down behind my ear, saying, "Don't, don't go along with that." (laughter) (inaudible) And then after the whole thing was over, the guy finally backed down and was very embarrassed, and said, no, he didn't have any elastic shoelaces, and don't ever come back. (laughter). And we got outside, and PB said, "That's the only way these people will learn. As long as they can get away with that sort of thing, they'll keep doing it. As long as they can get away with that kind of stuff, they'll keep doing that. It's only when people will them on the carpet for it, that they'll stop doing that sort of thing." So would it be reasonable to pay for and walk out with these shoelaces that weren't what you wanted?

LrD: (inaudible)

RC: I wouldn't think so.

EM: That reminds me of a similar story where we went to a tea-room. And it was a very fancy place and there was a very haughty Italian waiter, and he didn't give PB exactly what he'd ordered, and our--Vic's and mine--inclination was to say, "Oh well," just kind of let it go, especially because this guy was not very nice and not easy to deal with. And PB wouldn't let us let it go. At one point he said, "If Tony were here, Tony would go into the kitchen, and straighten this place out." (laughter) (inaudible). He wouldn't let us let it go, because it wasn't right, it wasn't correct, and the guy wasn't behaving properly. He said he wouldn't go back to that place again, on the other hand, while we were there we had to straighten it out. And that meant causing a scene, walking into the kitchen, when you're not supposed to, talking to the guy who's head of the place, it meant causing a scene and it was our inclination not to do that.

(LR & several St): . . .

EM: Yes, PB wouldn't, but (inaudible).

(Almost halfway through T1, S2)

RC: I think maybe another image, another example of mastering the event, was you know, how PB had trouble with the concierge in the building where he was living, and there was this pudgy little French fellow who had a very good opinion of himself, who really liked to be running this building, and PB was just so meek with him, so timid, and the fellow went from the original position of having a lot of doubt and skepticism about PB to actually liking him quite a bit. So he really put himself outwardly, in a very apparently obsequious position, but nonetheless he got exactly what he wanted, exactly what he meant to have as a result of the situation. So it seems to be a real different thing between saying you develop the dominant ego in a situation to really learning how to master the event.

[Audio File 1984 0229a Ends]

[Audio File 1984 0229b Begins]

APPROPRIATENESS OF SHARING CERTAIN KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE; SEEING HISTORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD-IDEA

(JG/RC=less than 1 min.)

RC: . . . As an example, we were talking one time about astrology, and how there's so many people--there's so many different levels--doing astrology at so many different levels. And it was in the context, a few times, of dramatic incidents to me, that I was inundated by a piece of information about somebody that I had no idea what to do with it. Whether to tell them or not tell them--either one seemed to be a choice--so I got out of the whole situation of looking at people's charts, and stuff like that. We were talking about that particular situation. And PB said well you can appreciate why that kind of knowledge is really reserved for sages, because they know what to do with it. So then we started talking about astrology. And I was saying, can a person really give advice if he's not a sage. And he said, "Yes he can--provided that he's got a certain level of expertise, and he's in his element, at that level, and he knows what he's doing. And as long as he stays to that level, he could be helpful. If he tries to expand beyond it, then it gets risky. But it does seem you can have an area in which you do have the knowledge--it might not be the ultimate knowledge, or something, but in that specific area you know what you're talking about." . . .

(approx. 9 min. student discussion)

RC: . . . But he's got some quotes about the World-Idea where he says he has such a miniscule understanding of the World-Idea that it makes him very humble, but on the other hand he feels like he understands enough of it to be helpful to other people. It seems on the one hand you're talking about something tremendously vast, but also that there are particular periods, particular phases where a certain thing is emphasized. He talked to some people about how--oh, you'll appreciate Christianity better when you see its context in the development of the World-Idea, like a certain historical culture or development will actually be bringing out a certain quality in souls that are incarnating on the planet during that period of time. The quality that's being emphasized NOW seems to be intellectuality, independent thinking. Whereas in other periods if somebody was an independent thinker, he was punished severely for it . . .

(5 min: RC/HS/PC/. . .)

JG: Would you read it again?

AD: No, no.

TS: Moving aright along . . .

(8 min: HS/. . . PB: "It is an age old . . .")

THE LOVE OF PHILOSOPHY AND DISSOLVING IN ITS WONDER AND AWE

PB: "We who honour philosophy so highly cannot afford to be other than honest with ourselves. We have to acknowledge that the end of all our striving is surrender. No human being can do other than this--an utterly humble prostration, where we dissolve, lose the ego, lose ourselves--the rest is paradox and mystery." (20.5.11)

(13 min. student discussion)

RC: Actually one of the last things that he wrote--it didn't get finalized--but he was working on this thing--he kept basically starting out as "Since no human mind can possibly fathom the infinite depths of the divine mind, the only thing that we can really say is to make the "I" over into the Stillness, and then let the Stillness do the rest." Very similar. (Q: see also 23.8.25 which is the original (24v/3/1))

AH: Anthony, are you speaking tonight?

AD: I'm listening.

AH: I don't understand this quote, would you help?

AD: Well, it's a very beautiful quote. He's saying those of us who love philosophy, cultivate it, and understand it, are brought to wonder and awe and dissolve in that.

St: (inaudible)? Brought to what?

AD: The wonder and the awe. And then of course, what follows will be mysteries and paradoxes, but that would be philosophic understanding. (pause) That's my interpretation.

AH: So the "we" here is students of philosophy, lovers of philosophy?

AD: Those who love philosophy--that's what philosophy is, "lovers of wisdom." Those of us who love philosophy, cultivate it, and understand something about it, after a while will feel as though they are dissolving in that wonder, in that awe. It's inevitable. You don't even have to bring in self-abnegation, because it will happen very naturally if you truly cultivate philosophy. So you see I'm with you.

RC: --just lost his shut out. (Q: baseball joke)

KD: Because you're brought out of your personal being, it's thinking itself that draws you out, thinking that, when you try to understand metaphysical principles, that somehow that brings you out of the personal?

AD: Yes, it brings you out of the personal. You don't live in a world of action and reaction, you get to understand the FACT that IS.

KD: What?

AD: You get to understand the FACT that IS, and not your reactions to it. There's a fact, alright, there's a WHAT, and you try to understand that, and that means you have to eliminate your reactions to it. If you eliminate your reactions to it, you eliminate the whole dualistic process of thinking, you get into the depths of philosophy, and then the wonder and the awe of it all begins to dawn on you.

KD: Why? I don't mean the wonder and the awe--

AD: Well, when you get rid of the little ego, then the rest comes in. The rest can't come in unless you get rid of the ego. You get some of that now and then, don't you?

KD: You mean the, holding, like being tied to an idea, and having it lead you. I think that's what you're implying, that that process can draw you out of your little self, whereas normal living, normal experience keeps you confined within the personal action and reaction.

AD: Yes, you could put it that way.

KD: That's why I think there's a quote, where he says you've got to LOVE it, it's not enough to talk about philosophy, you've got to love it . . .

AD: I don't remember last week.

KD: I don't either.

AD: Why do you want it, more specifically, as we said?

KD: Because it's real important--

AD: Yes, but in spiritual matters, a certain amount of vagueness is necessary in order for the spirituality to enter. If it's too precise, you will find some difficulties.

KD: Vagueness?

AD: Yes, a certain amount of vagueness, an ambiguity is necessary in order for you to get in.

KD: Oh, that's what keeps the mystery and the wonder in.

AD: No, no! (laughter)

TS: . . .

AD: You people want a city map, not only with the streets on it, but with the apartment numbers written. (laughter) With your names on it.

KD: I asked because PB talked about that, you know, he said it was through the discussion . . . that this transformation out of the lower self takes place and we hear so much about that--true thinking, true jnana, whatever that means--

AD: Well, it's pretty much like I'm saying now, Kathleen. When you are listening very intensely to a piece of music there is no choice but to DENY the self, so that you could, so to speak, properly appreciate through identity that music. And in a similar way, to properly appreciate the wonder of the ideas, some of the things that are explained in philosophy, it is necessary to get rid of your "I." And in philosophy, if a person is truly in love with the things that he's understanding, it's inevitable that an abnegation of the self will take place. And all of those will eventually lead to that self-abnegation. You can't get into philosophy if you're full of yourself. That's a pretty straightforward quote. (silence)

REACTIONS TO A SAGE

PB: "The philosopher accepts his predestined isolation not only because that is the way his position has to be, but also because his physical presence arouses negative feelings in the hearts of ordinary people as it arouses positive ones in the hearts of certain seekers. The negatives may range all the way from puzzlement, bewilderment, and suspicion to fear, opposition, and downright enmity. The positives may range from instinctive attraction to a readiness to lay down life in his defense or service. All these feelings arise instantly, irrationally, and instinctively. And they are unconnected with whether or not he reveals his true personal identity. This is because they are the consequence of a psychical impingement of his aura

upon theirs. The contact is unseen and unapparent in the physical world, but it is very real in the mental-emotional world. It is truly a psychical experience for both: clear and precise and correctly understood by him, vague and disturbing and utterly misunderstood by ordinary people as well as pseudo-questers. It is both a psychical and a mystical experience for those genuine questers with whom he has some inward affinity, a glad recognition of a long-lost, much revered Elder Brother. Unfortunately, despite the generous compassion and enormous goodwill which he bears in his heart for all alike, it is the unpleasant contacts which make up the larger number whenever the philosopher descends into the world. Let him not be blamed if he prefers solitude to society. For there is nothing he can do about it. People are what they are. Most times when he tries to make himself agreeable to them, as though they both belonged to the same spiritual level, he fails. He learns somewhat wearily to accept his isolation and their limitation as inevitable and, at the present stage of human evolution, unalterable. He learns, too, that it is futile to desire these things to be otherwise.” (Perspectives p. 280 & 20.5.151)

(AH requests to reread quote; it’s not reread, instead:)

AD: All you have to do is think of your reactions when the Dalai Lama was here, or when PB was here--the word is ‘reactions.’

EM: Could you talk about the reactions, . . . it sounded like two different levels, the transcendental peace and the very positive mystical . . .

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1984 0229b Ends; Side 2 Begins)

TS: Randy was saying in observing one’s immediate travels with PB that there were both reactions generated in individuals in the world that had no sense of who he was. I remember when there was one time when I got on a bus and hopped somebody out of a seat--I wanted to be sure he could sit down. He didn’t--which made the situation interesting. (laughter) And he stood there on this bus, which was sort of jostling along, and this woman who was older than he was got up and offered him a seat and he immediately sat down--in a moment, and she just--at that moment, she just burst into this--like almost this light came through her, and it was a wonderful thing to see that kind of recognition. And we ended up wandering around a restaurant, and of course she ended up sitting at the next table (laughter) . . . (Q: this anecdote also in 12/01/82 class.)

AD: That’s a little different, Tim. There he’s manipulating.

TS: Oh. (laughter)

AB: And the other side was the care he took to avoid evoking any suspicion in the world at large.

TS: Would you mind adding a few sentences to that?

AD: To what you said?

TS: To what YOU said.

AD: Oh, oh, he was actually kind of steering her.

JG: Into the restaurant? (laughter)

AD: To be in his presence for awhile. He was doing that deliberately, he could tell when a person (is ripe). And he can tell when you're no damn good, too. So sometimes he did that deliberately. (long silence.)

Try another. Don't go to sleep.

RC: It only took us about four months, but we did manage to read all of them in this section, that are typed here. We could--it might be a good idea to go back to the beginning and read some of the more comprehensive ones to do an overview.

AD: Well, it's up to them. -- I want to get them into the "Negatives."

RC: The "Negatives"? Which section do you mean by the "Negatives"?

AD: I'd have to look, but you know, emotional purification, the ego quotes. I'd rather go into some of those.

RC: Well, as you know, there's a lot of that.

AD: It's worthwhile. Alright, in that case: (Rings bell) Thank you.

[Audio File 1984 0229b Ends]