

**CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
March 7, 1984
PB PARAS; PHILOSOPHY**

TOPIC: PB Paras

SUBJECT: Philosophy

SUBSUBJECTS: Overself, Unit of Life, "What is the Use" PB Para

CONTENTS:

PB PARA: "WHAT IS THE USE"

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT OF LIFE

BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

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

DIAGRAM referred to not with this transcript version.

NOTE: Earlier transcript versions exist.

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1984 03/07 at Wisdom's Goldenrod
PB Paras; Philosophy
Readable Edited Transcript

PB PARA: "WHAT IS THE USE"

[Audio File 1984 0307a Begins]

[Note: The following quote was read at the beginning of the class but didn't make it onto the tape. It is included for completeness.]

PB: "What is the use, ask many questioners, of first, an evolution of the human soul which merely brings it back to the same point where it started and second, of developing a selfhood through the long cycles of evolution only to have it merged or dissolved in the end into the unselfed Absolute? Is not the whole scheme absurdly useless? The answer is that if this were really the case, the criticism passed would be quite a fair one. But it is not the case. The unit of life emanated from the Overself begins with the merest glimmer of consciousness, appearing on our plane as a protozoic cell. It evolves eventually into the fullest human consciousness, including the intellectual and spiritual. It does not finish as it began; on the contrary, there is a grand purpose behind all its travail. There is thus a wide gulf between its original state and its final one. The second point is more difficult to clear up, but it may be plainly affirmed that man's individuality survives even in the divinest state accessible to him. There it becomes the same in quality but not identical in essence. The most intimate mental and physical experiences of human love cast a little light for our comprehension of this mystery. The misunderstanding which leads to these questions arises chiefly because of the error which believes that it is the divine soul which goes through all this pilgrimage by reincarnating in a series of earthly forms. The true teaching about reincarnation is not that the divine soul enters into the captivity and ignorance of the flesh again and again but that something emanated from the soul, that is, a unit of life that eventually develops into the personal ego, does so. The Overself contains this reincarnating ego within itself but does not itself reincarnate. It is the parent; the ego is only its offspring. The long and tremendous evolution through which the unit of life passes from its primitive cellular existence to its matured human one is a genuine evolution of its consciousness. Whoever believes that the process first plunges a soul down from the heights into a body or forces Spirit to lose itself in Matter, and then leaves it no alternative but to climb all the way back to the lost summit again, believes wrongly. The Overself never descends or climbs, never loses its own sublime consciousness. What really does this is something that emanates from it and that consequently holds its capacity and power in latency, something which is finited out of the Overself's infinitude and becomes first, the simple unit of life and later, the complex human ego. It is not the Overself that suffers and struggles during this long unfoldment but its child, the ego. It is not the Overself that slowly expands its intelligence and consciousness, but the ego. It is not the Overself that gets deluded by ignorance and passion, by selfishness and extroversion, but the ego.

"The belief in the merger of the ego held by some Hindu sects or in its annihilation held by some Buddhist ones, is unphilosophical. The "I" differentiated itself out of the infinite ocean of Mind into a distinct individuality after a long development through the diverse kingdoms of Nature. Having thus arrived at consciousness of what it is, having travelled the spiral of growth from germ to man, the result of all this effort is certainly not gained only to be thrown away.

“Were this to happen then the entire history of the human race would be a meaningless one, its entire travail a resultless one, its entire aspiration a valueless one. If evolution were merely the complementary return journey of an involutory process, if the evolving entity arrived only at its starting point for all its pains, then the whole plan would be a senseless one. If the journey of man consisted of nothing more than treading a circle from the time of his emergence from the Divine Essence to the time of his mergence back into it, it would be a vain and useless activity. It would be a stupendous adventure but also a stupid one. There is something more than that in his movement. Except in the speculations of certain theorists, it simply does not happen.

“The self-consciousness thus developed will not be dissolved, extinguished, or re-absorbed into the Whole again, leaving not a trace behind. Rather will it begin a new spiral of evolution towards higher altitudes of consciousness and diviner levels of being, in which it will co-operate as harmoniously with the universal existence as formerly it collided against it. It will not separate its own good from the general good. Here is part of the answer to this question: What are the ultimate reasons for human wanderings through the world-process? That life matters, that the universe possesses meaning, and that the evolutionary agonies are leading to something worthwhile--these are beliefs we are entitled to hold. If the cosmos is a wheel which turns and turns endlessly, it does not turn aimlessly. Evolution does not return us to the starting point as we were. The ascent is not a circle but a spiral.

“Evolution presupposes that its own possibility has always been latent within the evolving entities. Hence the highest form is hidden away in the lowest one. There is development from the blindly instinctive life of animals to the consciously thinking life of man. The blind instinctive struggles of the plant to sustain itself are displaced in the evolutionary process by the intelligent self-conscious efforts of the man. Nor does this ascent end in the Vedantic merger or the Buddhistic annihilation. It could not, for it is a development of the individuality. Everywhere we find that evolution produces variety. There are myriads of individual entities, but each possesses some quality of uniqueness which distinguishes it from all others. Life may be one but its multitudinous expressions do differ, as though difference were inherent in such expression.

“Evolution as mentalistically defined by philosophy is not quite the same as evolution as materialistically defined by Darwin. With us it is simply the mode of striving, through rhythmic rise and fall, for an ever fuller expansion of the individual unit’s consciousness. However, the ego already possesses all such possibilities latently. Consequently the whole process, although apparently an ascending one, is really an unfolding one.” (26.4.257 & Perspectives pp. 368-370)

LDm: See, I get lost there.

AD: Why not follow it out? Follow out what you said.

LDm: That this individuality which is this ego, this historical--

AD: That’s alright. (not clear if talking to LDm)

LD: --being. It’s like mind differentiates itself out, becomes conscious of itself. The I-principle is--I don’t want to say it’s eternal--perpetual existence.

RC: It’s interesting--that sentence you’re referring to “The “I” differentiated itself out of the infinite ocean of Mind into a distinct individuality AFTER a long development through the diverse kingdoms of Nature.” (RC emphasis of AFTER.)

LDm: It already has a history.

RC: It seems it was a unit of life before it become a distinct individuality.

LDm: But I have to ask, what's the use of it all? Mind differentiates something out of itself to become conscious of itself. Because it seems Mind is already conscious of itself the way we defined mind. (pause)

AD: Don't look at me.

LDm: I'm looking at the stereo. (laughter)

DB: I might be misreading this, but I get the impression that this unit of life--you know how the Hindus say that ignorance is beginningless and doesn't have an end--it almost sounds as if this unit of life is endless, but it does have a beginning. So it starts its journeying out as this bare glimmer of consciousness, and in some sense it has to be understood as making a first appearance within manifestation . . . From its point of view it never was until it was emanated . . . That's how I understand it.

SC: You have to look at it two ways. And the way David's looking at it would be in the context of the association with the developing World-Idea. To talk about unit of life in the sense of emanation from Overself, in some way it's going to partake of what Overself is, and there's not going to be any limiting factor on it and there's not going to be an evolution. But on the other hand that unit of life associates with the developing World-Idea and in that way I see you talking about beginning with a glimmer of consciousness, because of that association, and then an unfolding that develops through all the realms of Natures and reaches its apex at some point historically.

LDm: In some way the powers of the Overself themselves seem to be unfolding and developing, and to just say the development takes place in the ego is hard to understand, unless we speak of the powers of the Soul itself developing and unfolding.

AD: But, Louis, didn't we say that the Overself always remains what it is, eternally? Go ahead.

CdA: Before you said--he talks about it as an ego, he's not talking about it as the Witness (as power of) the soul and I think that was what Sam was trying to say--if we can apply--

AD: No, talk louder.

CdA: I don't know the answer. It seems that if we can apply the work that you have done with the diagrams it would be helpful because the many levels that we have used to speak about this unit of life. Now if he's talking about it as the ego, I thought Sam's point was that you have to speak about it as already embodied in the earth realm . . . But we're always speaking about the levels of emanation from the Soul so I think we would make that clear . . .

LdS: I think this notion of ego that PB's working with involves this mysterious or complex entity, it's not totally on the side of manifestation or the World-Idea, but it seems to have its foot in both camps, or have access to both the spiritual principle Overself--and also has elements that come from the manifestation.

CdA: Well, he said that it holds all the potentials of the Overself within itself latently.

LdS: Yes, it holds its whole unfoldment from the very beginning, and in that sense it does have some intimate association with the Overself, it's not sundered.

CdA: My first association was that he was talking about the Witness, because that's the word I'm used to hearing.

AD: But he doesn't USE that word; he uses the word 'ego'.

CdA: . . .

AD: Stick to this terminology.

CdA: I know, I'm saying that's MY mistake. When he talks about ego, it's a little different than I understand it. The ego is holding the entire potentiality both intellectually and spiritually of the Overself. It's different from what I understand, what I understand is that--

AD: What do you mean "is holding all the potentiality of the Overself"?

CdA: That's what the quote says, this is "something that emanates from it and that consequently holds its capacity and power in latency." (Q: sounds like a diagram is being drawn on the blackboard.)

LdS: You're trying to see this notion of ego as it's being used here as something grander than, say, the natal chart of an individual, because he says it's that entity that reincarnates.

CdA: But he's speaking of the intelligence that life has, that it's latent within the germ . . . I wanted Anthony to comment on it, on what he thought.

AD: I don't want to comment, I want to hear you people. I'm sure you all read it three or four times.

LDm: That this Overself, from its sheer power, can't help but emanate this light and this light in turn can't help but create, and this creation is the ego which is created perpetually. This would leave room for the development of this created entity, the ego, and it would also leave intact the Overself from not becoming involved with its creation. Although the light that emanates from the Overself and in turn creates the ego, that light sometimes seems to get caught up with its creation.

BS: Is that light or life?

LDm: Light.

AD: What do you mean--ITS creation?

LDm: The light that emanates from the Overself in turn creates this entity we call ego--Now this light gets identified with its creation--

AD: Again, what do you mean--ITS creation?

LDm: Its creation being the ego--(its/it's) actualizing in a different mode; sensible and whatnot, its inherent, its potential being.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT OF LIFE

AD: How would you look at it, Sam?

SC: I was thinking that what he's calling the ego here really is that light and that there's an association-- you can look at it in itself as an emanation of Overself, and that side of it there's an not evolution, and you can look at it in its association with World-Idea, and in that sense there is an evolution.

AD: You're saying then that this unit of life is going to evolve because it's become part of the World-Idea or involved in the World-Idea?

SC: Yes.

AD: Yes. (muttered assent)

JohnL: I don't understand the thing at all. How can a protozoa turn into a frog and then a dinosaur and eventually into a human being?

AD: I don't think he means that there is a kind of transformism. He's not saying that. He's not saying the protozoa turns into a frog, he's saying the UNIT OF LIFE evolves.

JL: What does that mean?

AD: What are you asking ME for? You all read these things many times, haven't you? You all understand them.

JL: I really don't know. If there's a certain continuity to the human species, let's say, that determines what a man is in terms of an idea, how can that be anything other than itself? How could it evolve from something else?

AD: He's not saying, John, that there is a transformation of species. Species do not change. But he's speaking about that unit of life evolving through the various species. So that's not a problem.

JL: It's like an eternal wanderer through all these forms.

AD: It goes through all these various kingdoms of nature, this unit of life. But this unit of life doesn't become a protozoa and then a frog, and then a bird. The unit of life doesn't go through those transformations, nor do the species go through it. Species A remains species A, and species B remains species B.

JL: What then would there be individual about that unit of life?

RC: When it dies, other ones don't die. The body that it animates is peculiarly an object to ITS self-sensitivity, not to the self-sensitivity of some other unit of life.

RG: It seems to have to contain a prescribed set of individual possibilities, as opposed to other possibilities, I'm coming from the Traditionalists . . .

JL: What do you mean possibilities?

RG: It has to be an eternal relationship in some sense--you can't think of the Overself in time emanating the ego and its unit of life, if it wasn't already a part of it in a principal relationship.

(Student discussion continues, approx. 2 min.)

(Middle of Side 1)

BS: In that case how would you distinguish it from the I AM principle?

RC: Aha! Which it? The emanation?

BS: The unit of life or the I AM principle.

AD: Tim, would you read that quotation for them? Now I don't like to do this, but just to remind you, read that quotation.

PB: "Because of the paradoxically dual nature which the Overself possesses, it is very difficult to make clear the concept of the Overself. Human beings are rooted in the ultimate mind through the Overself, which therefore partakes on the one hand of a relationship with a vibratory world and on the other of an existence which is above all relations. A difficulty is probably due to the vagueness or confusion about which standpoint it is to be regarded from. If it is thought of as the human soul, then the vibratory movement is connected with it. If it is thought of as transcending the very notion of humanity, and therefore in its undifferentiated character, the vibratory movement must disappear." (22.3.390 & Perspectives p. 296)

AD: Keep that in the back of your mind, now go on with this discussion.

(Student discussion = approx. 8 min./"Evolution as mentalistically . . ." reread (last paragraph from "What is the use")/then 10 minutes of student discussion.)

RG: . . . The unit of life has to proceed throughout all the levels of manifestation, and therefore the vibratory World-Idea has to be conceived as in the principle of manifestation, whether it's the earth, the Solar Logos, or whatever evolution that that unit of life is going to unfold through. Because if you stop the World-Idea at any level of manifestation you can't hold a continuity through the further levels of manifestation that it might evolve through . . .

CdA: Then how would you define the unit of life?

AD: When you speak of the World-Idea, you must speak of ego. No ego, no World-Idea. Then you have to refer to the pure transcendent Overself beyond all relations.

CdA: Would you say that at whatever level of manifestation you're speaking about, wherever you speak about that unit of life, you call it ego.

AD: Well, that's what he called it in that quote.

CdA: But on any level.

AD: On any level, yes, that's what he's calling it.

RC: The Solar Logos itself would be--the particular Solar Logos of our system would be a development of one of these units of life . . .

(Student discussion through end of Side 1 = approx. 10 min.)

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1984 0307a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

(Student discussion = 25 min.) (Middle of Side 2)

RC: What does “unit of life” mean to people . . . ?

AP: Why do you limit it to organic life when he says in the quote that the evolution has no limit, and that it includes the intellectual and spiritual in the end?

PD: But life is always formed in an intellectual form, as the organizing intelligence.

AD: No, life introduces forms.

RG: Life produces?

AD: Life produces forms.

PD: Life IS form.

AD: No.

AH: Concomitance doesn’t establish identity.

AD: Change the word a little bit. You think of it as (harmony?).

PD: (inaudible) . . . Life that we know.

AD: You’ve identified life with protoplasm.

PD: That’s a good place to start.

AD: Yes.

LdS: You’re saying concomitance establishes identity.

PD: No, I’m saying that’s part of the definition of unitized life.

LdS: I don’t see why, Paul.

PD: He didn’t say universal life, he said unitized life.

LdS: But I think Anna’s point that there is no limit to this evolving life means that NO forms are going to exhaust it. Form and life are two different things--that’s an important distinction. The life is not identical with the form that it takes.

(discussion continues through 2/3 of Side 2)

AD: Do you think we should withdraw that quote or do you want to continue? Do you want to continue the quote--I mean do you want to continue talking about the quote?

Students: Yes.

AD: Yes, good. Go ahead.

Students: No, no.

CdA: What are the other choices?

AD: (inaudible) I'm very neutral about this. It's a very important point, because it's a point that's hardly understood in almost any text you read, and even when you get the Traditionalists, you're going to find that this point is not explicated. They're going to just give you hints about it. So you know, your discussion's alright.

AP: Could you chip in?

AD: No.

(Student comments, etc. = 1-2 minutes.)

JA: . . . I think that he's talking about conventional notions of human soul and selfhood. One is the Western notion of human soul as abiding, proceeding and returning; the second one is the merger of self--the Vedantic notion. If either of these notions is true, and how would they make sense? There are two different notions of soul or self. He's saying that neither one of them are adequate, and that he's going to address himself to explain (inaudible).

(LR/RG/SC/etc. = 4 min.)

LR: But that "I" is something that was derived out of the human state, and wasn't therefore part of the protozoic state. When I was an amoeba--

PD: That's the next stage of evolution.

LR: (inaudible)

AD: Well, that would be included, wouldn't it, Linda, when you were an amoeba, in the total summation of what you are now.

LR: Yes, but is it appropriate to speak of I-ness when you're an amoeba?

AD: I-ness may come only when you're human, but it included all these previous steps.

LR: Right . . . He seems to be saying the I-ness is concomitant with the human state.

RC: Well, at least the differentiation of itself out into a distinct individuality, and arriving at a consciousness of what it really is.

LR: But that unit of life was there as soon as I was an amoeba. That was a unit of life, but it wasn't differentiated out.

AD: Unit of life was present when it was an amoeba as well as when it's a human being.

LR: But the I-ness, the sense of selfhood was only there in the human state.

AD: Yes, but you cannot preclude the previous states because they're included in the summation of the human state. Even in the formation of a human being from the time of the germ until the fetus is developed it goes through all those stages, they're all recapitulated. So they certainly would have to be included in the production of the I, you know, the Ahamkara, the I-maker.

DB: . . . What does it actually mean for this unit of life's consciousness and intelligence to develop and evolve, or unfold from within itself its potential? He's not talking in terms of a peculiar body, the one that it's associated with--he's talking about this individual life bringing forth out of itself and potential and in this process transforming the consciousness that it operates with and the intelligence that it operates with.

AD: You're asking the question of what is the meaning of all this evolution?

DB: I didn't mean to be.

KD: A good question.

DB: . . . I can understand the evolution of forms from Biology 101, and old ferns and the new ferns and the snakes, but what does it mean for a consciousness to evolve, an individual consciousness actually to evolve from a paramecium to a man, from a man to a sage? Now that's a tremendously mysterious idea.

CdA: . . . How do we talk about the development of the understanding? I think this question has been answered for a very long time here, that what develops, what evolves is the understanding, and it's permanent, and it evolves through the experiences that the ego has within the World-Idea, that the World-Idea is teaching the Soul, the Soul is learning from the World-Idea, and when it has real understanding, when it has evolved through these levels so that then it can reflect and actually grasp the essence of an idea, or a virtue or whatever. That's what evolution means?

(Student discussion continues through end of Audio File)

[Audio File 1984 0307a Ends]

[Audio File 1984 0307b Begins]

(Student discussion = almost 2½ min.)

CdA: No, it's not always there in the germ of life. It's always there in the Soul--the intellectual cosmos is within the Soul. Now there's an emanant from the Individual soul, there's an emanant from the soul, this germ of life--he says this in the quote--this germ of life holds latent all the powers and capacities of the Overself.

AD: Do you think it could siphon off all that stuff and then the Overself would be empty of those powers (inaudible)?

CdA: No, no.

AD: No? Just asking.

KD: He says in the quote there's a great big difference between the first stage and the final stage. He answers his question. He says, "Yes there is a reason. It's not all for no use."

RC: He says one of the things the evolution produces is individuality . . .

KD: Do you equate that development of individuality with this growth of understanding? Is that development of individuality the same thing as saying that consciousness expands? Maybe a way of

looking at it is to say that what grows is not the consciousness, and what expands is maybe this knowledge, and that knowledge is always associated with the life.

AD: Well, what's the difference between consciousness, knowledge, and life?

KD: Well-- (laughter)

AD: I just want to know.

KD: Well, you tell me the answer. (laughter) I'm ready.

AD: Well, tonight's your night.

(RC/etc. = 2 min.)

PB: "What is the use . . ." quote read in its entirety.

(Bell rings)

AS: We ended with the same quote we began with. Was it a spiral evolution or a circular evolution?

[Audio File 1984 0307b Ends]