

BASICS 2

Here is a teaching, a Universal Knowledge: the genuine philosophy... of PB

The day will inexorably come when this pen shall move no more and I wish therefore to leave on record, for the benefit of those who shall come after, a sacred and solemn testimony that I know—as surely as I know that I am not this pen which scribes these lines—that a being, benign, wise, protective, and divine, whom men call the Soul, whom I call the Overself, truly exists in the hearts of all; therefore all may discover it... For the presence of man's own innermost divinity is the guarantee that he must inescapably seek and find it.

Here is a teaching which the intellect may accept, and the conscience may approve. Here are complex ideas which will need time for the modern man to work them out in his own way; here are germinal conceptions whose full significances may at first remain unrecognized but will disclose themselves as gradually as trees disclose themselves out of seeds.

Such an exalted teaching is never to be forced on others; they must first feel the desire for truth, and that strongly enough to begin to seek for it. Each man therefore obtains the truths to which he is entitled. It is all a matter of ripeness.

It is a teaching for the person of large mind and larger heart, who is no longer satisfied with creeds or systems that are only fragmentarily true.

Philosophy is for those who demand the ultimate, who are satisfied with nothing less and who have enough discernment to discriminate between it and its many substitutes.

In the presence of sectarianism, with its rivalry and recrimination, philosophy remains aloof and silent. Unlike the sects, it is concerned with universal truths that will always be valid.

Unless men possess the right intuitional calibre, they cannot grasp this teaching, for it stands at an altitude beyond the reach of the gross and the materialistic.

Those who are satisfied with centering themselves within the ego will not be drawn to such teachings, which educate the pupils to cultivate constantly a withdrawal from the ego.

They dismiss the teaching in a few seconds under the erroneous belief that its expounder is just another cultist. It is easy to fall into such a gross misconception since they know nothing about it, or about the ancient tradition behind it.

This teaching will only be of interest to those who have long felt an aspiration towards higher-than-ordinary experience.

There is a teaching to meet the need of each type of mind. Because there is such a variety of types in the world, there is room for a variety of teachings. But this said, and in practising our tolerance, we need not blind ourselves to the fact that just as there is a progression of levels of quality among these minds, so there is among the teachings.

The teaching does not have to go forth to meet people. They will find their own way to meet it as they develop through science, religion, art, and life.

Some who had never before heard of these teachings found them so reasonable, so inspiring, and so helpful that they instantly accepted them as true.

If there is any future for a teaching, it belongs to the present one. It does not have to stand on the defensive just as it does not have to use loud-speaking propagandists. Its existence is justified by humanity's essential need of knowing what it is, what the world is, and what to make of its own life. If humanity finds such needs satisfied by its orthodox religions, mysticisms, and metaphysics—why then, that is as it should be. For only when it has tried and tested them all, only when it has noted their insufficiencies and failures, only when its own mind and heart have adequately matured is it likely to appreciate our teaching. The great intellectual width of this teaching, the grand compassion which it inculcates, and the sane balance which it advocates must commend it to those enquiring minds who not only seek but are ready for the best.

The principles of chemistry have no individual's name attached to them. We accept them not because so-and-so discovered them, but because they can be tested and proven by anyone anywhere. So it is with principles and teachings. Because they are really factual, no names or personalities should be put forward as the guarantee of their correctness. They must be presented impersonally. This is a teaching which can and will be expanded; which is open to change, correction, and improvement—like every science. It asks us to look at the facts of life and see how they support it. They should be examined as actual facts found in Nature. The emphasis will be on these facts, and the personality of the teacher pushed into the background.

It is wiser to keep attention upon the teaching and not upon the teacher's personality.

The usefulness of philosophy

For those who have devoted several years to its detailed study, this teaching is not a matter of pious belief or fanciful thinking but a tested fact and demonstrated truth. Nor, for them, does it depend upon the say-so of some bygone man or the tradition of some bygone century. It depends upon procurable evidence and appeals to scientific attitude.

Thus the vaguely felt, dimly apprehended, and always symbolic truth of religion is developed into clear full direct knowledge by philosophy.

Nowhere in history have sorcery and magic demonstrated that they are utterly and always reliable means of dealing with distressful personal conditions. We feel the need of tested procedures which have yielded more satisfactory results, which means that we feel the need of rational understanding and rational techniques of dealing with those problems.

The ego's interference shows itself in practical life no less than in mystical life. Under its influence, people create a false and favourable mental picture of a situation or of a person. They then expect one or the other to yield results that by their very nature could not be yielded. This leads to disappointment and unhappiness within themselves. Or the same people create a false but unfavourable picture and then severely criticize another for faults which do not exist outside the picture itself. This leads to disharmony and friction with others. From this simple instance we may see that the elimination of egotistic interference—a goal that philosophic discipline sets for itself—is not merely a theoretical affair for dreamers or hermits with nothing else to do but is a practical affair promising great practical benefits for everyone who has to live or work in the world. The charge that philosophy is useless can only be made by those who have failed to inform themselves sufficiently about it.

Philosophy sees the whole route and therefore can correctly point out the next step forward to those who are still groping their way along it.

To understand and apply this philosophy

The notion that there is something futile about philosophy is quite correct when applied to what passes under that name very often, but quite incorrect when applied to genuine philosophy; and it is genuine philosophy which is here presented.

When a man is ready to confess his ignorance, he is ready to begin his study of philosophy. When a man is ready to drop the distorting influence of the emotions and passions which actuate him, he is ready to begin the study of philosophy.

Philosophy will have little interest for those who are eager only for animal satisfactions and human selfishnesses. It is for more evolved types, who understand that a higher life is possible and worth working for.

Useless would it be to thrust these truths on unprepared people and to get them to take up a way of spiritual growth unsuited to their taste and temperament. Persuasion should arise of its own accord through inner attraction.

This teaching can be understood only by those who try to live it: all others merely *think* they understand it. Only those who have incorporated it in their lives for a number of years can know how intensely practical philosophy is.

How he is to apply this philosophy to particular situations in everyday living—for we live in practical times and a teaching is judged and tested not only by what it claims to do but also by what it actually does—is quite rightly a man's own business and responsibility.

Learn how to live the teaching out in the midst of the world, yes! with all the temptations and trials; to shun cloistered virtues which, because they are untested, may not be virtues at all; to stay amongst suffering ignorant men who need enlightenment and not to leave them to rot in their darkness; to face the difficulties of worldly life as brave students of philosophy and not as cowardly weaklings; to be too big-hearted and tolerant, too broad-minded and intelligent to separate yourselves; in short, to follow Jesus' advice and be in the world yet not of it.

Such an attainment as philosophy proposes cannot be reached all at once. It must be approached through a series of preparatory steps. They will be slow in pace at first, but quicker later and sudden towards the end.

It is a long journey from the condition of seeker to that of sage. But this is true only so far as we ascribe reality to time. To those who know that our human existence is a movement through events, but that the human being in its essence transcends all events and dwells in timelessness, this journey may be considerably shortened or swiftly brought to its destination. For that, the thorough understanding of philosophy and its incessant application to oneself is required.

Suppose you knew that this was to be your last day on earth. How would you behave towards others? Would you not sink all short-range attitudes and rise above the petty selfishness, the pitiful enmities, and the harsh discords which may have marred your past? Would you not try at least to feel goodwill toward all men? This is how philosophy bids you behave at all times and not merely on your deathbed.

The practice of philosophy is not easy, but it is the only way to gain its advantages. When it takes firm root in day-to-day life, experience, behaviour, and activity, its truth is tested and survives, solidly confirmed.

Philosophy rises above sects and is therefore free from sectarian dispute, friction, and hostility. It is naturally tolerant, knowing that as men rise in cultural and moral development, their beliefs will rise in truthfulness and nobility.

Philosophy tries to bring a man to realize his own divinity for himself. Hence it tries to bring him to independent thinking, personal effort, and intuitive development. This is not the popular way nor the easy one; it offers no gregarious comfort or herd support. But it is the only way for the seeker after absolute truth. Though the solitary student may suffer from certain disadvantages, he also enjoys certain definite advantages.

It is because we live in unprecedentedly troubled days that the light of philosophy is so needed. The more distressing the time in which we live, the more necessary is the quest for what will raise us above all distress.

Philosophy will show a man how to find his better self, will lead him to cultivate intuition, will guide him to acquire sounder values and stronger will, will train him in right thinking and wise reflection, and, lastly, will give him correct standards of ethical rightness or wrongness. If its theoretical pursuit is so satisfying that it can be an end and a reward in itself, its practical application to current living is immeasurably *useful*, valuable, and helpful.

Philosophy bids him follow its quest and practise its ethics in his own person before he bids others do so. Only after he has succeeded in doing this, can he have the right to address himself to them. Only after he has discovered its results and tested its values for himself, can he guide them without the risks of deception on the one hand or hypocrisy on the other.

No philosopher has ever turned away from these teachings. No student of philosophy has ever done so without returning again after, with time and experience, he had more thoroughly tested its comparative worth or truth against whatever else he had tried.

Philosophy offers as a first truth the affirmation that we live in a universe of purpose and not one of caprice.

Philosophy never ceases to affirm that the soul exists, and that human consciousness can be raised to embrace it.

Philosophy includes religion but not "a" religion. It is universal, not sectarian.

(Editor's note: "religion" etymologically from the Latin "religare", from "re-unite" the human being with divinity, the transcendent)

The philosophical attitude maintains fairness and courtesy even toward those who attack philosophy.

Philosophy demands that we actualize our ideals. Wisdom must flower in deeds that accord with it or it is not wisdom. Action is the decisive factor, the acid test of all mystical, metaphysical, and religious pretensions to a

superior ethic. Therefore the ethical values, such as compassion and integrity, which arise from the interior experience of metaphysical and mystical meditation must also be upheld in the exterior space-time world.

The highest attainment in philosophy, that of the sage, comes from a union of the sharpest, subtlest thinking and of the capacity to enter the thought-free state—a combination of real knowledge and felt peace—balanced, united, yielding truth. This is what makes the sage, whose understanding and peace are his own, who does not depend upon any outside person. Yet it is not the little ego's emotion nor its intellectuality which has brought him to this truth. It is the highest human mind, the finest human feeling. The total man cannot lose what he has attained. It is the higher power working inside the human being.

The PB's Timeless Message

This synthesis has developed from the world-wide researches of this writer, plus the secret traditions of Oriental teachers, the personal experiences of Occidental adepts, and the needs of modern aspirants. It notes with approval the trend toward interest in yoga and mysticism, but with regret where so much of this interest is directed to antique or medieval types unsuited to those needs, which are based on professional business and occupational conditions unknown to such earlier types. Into this synthesis has gone the garnerings from great storehouses of the past, but added to them are the fresh creative findings of the present. Orient and Occident, ancient and modern, have joined together to produce this distinctive teaching. It is not enough to resuscitate the doctrines and methods of a bygone era; we must also evolve our own. And this can be done only out of firsthand experience of illumination under modern conditions.

I am not a mere transcriber of Hindu thought. Some Hindus and their Western converts who believed so once see their mistake now, and many others will see it later before my pen is through with its job. I must forestall any Indian critic here and now, by reminding them that I am teaching this not as an Indian tradition but as a universal one. The present fact is indeed that I no longer regard myself as an exponent of any particular ancient Indian system. I wish to speak only of such knowledge as lives within me, as I have arrived at through my own thinking, experiment, and research, but which is nevertheless firmly based upon a reformulation of the hidden wisdom of Asia. I claim no special merit for original doctrine but only for original synthesis of existing doctrines. My talents have been employed in the direction of choice rather than invention. Yet this was no small matter. If I escaped with my sanity, it was only at the cost of gigantic efforts which may render smooth the path of those who shall follow when I have gone.

That which guided me through this labyrinth was the light of my own philosophic experience.

This is not a personal teaching, peculiar to its author alone. Its fundamental tenets have been taught since the hoariest antiquity, in the Far, Middle, and Near East, as well as in the great Mediterranean cultures. It is true that they were not taught to the generality of people, but that was only because the latter had not reached the needed educational standard to understand and welcome it. It is true also that the author has adapted the teaching to the modern situation but that still leaves its essentials unchanged.

Here then is a teaching, very old and very wise, which summarizes all human knowledge, actual and possible, and which shows man how best to shape his personal and practical life. I am not its originator. I can but try to re-present it to a troubled, broken, and blinded world which waits for this knowledge in modern form, as a benighted traveller waits for the dawn.

These teachings are not the result of conjecture nor the mirror of opinion. They are insights got by an opening of the inner eyes. This fact must be pointed out, in all humility, if they are to carry to any reader the revelatory understanding which they have already brought the writer.

The immediate task today is for philosophy to deliver its message. The secondary task is to assist those who accept this message to come to a proper and adequate understanding of it. The first is for the multitude and hence public.
The second is for the individual and hence private.

These teachings have appeared in the world in their present form and at the present time because they correspond to a genuine need of a certain section of humanity.

A teaching which helps men and women to meet adversity with courage, opposition with serenity, and temptation with insight can surely render a real service to the modern world.

¡Keeping this teaching alive!

The worth of this teaching does not depend upon the numbers of people who espouse it. The weaker the response which it receives from the world in general, the stronger should be the effort put forth by the few, if they really believe in it, to keep it alive.

There are great truths which the world needs today but which the world is not consciously seeking for and therefore will not readily accept. Those who have found these truths, tested their correctness and worth, are consequently not willing to engage in the futile path of aggressive proselytizing. They quietly make the truth available to whosoever is willing to take the trouble to seek it out.

Those of us who are the humble spokespersons of philosophy neither seek cheap triumphs nor expect swift victories. We know where human nature stands today. We are resigned to accept whatever results may come because we are convinced that the forces promoting human moral and mental growth are irresistible, that however slow and long the human journey may be, its final arrival at Truth and Beauty and Goodness can never be prevented.

The Paul Brunton's work and his love of Truth

Only when love ceases to be personal and becomes impersonal, when it passes out of the local into the universal, does it fulfil itself and attain its own unmixed and unadulterated integrity.

I have gathered my materials from the West as well as the East, from modern science as well as ancient metaphysics, from Christian mysticism as well as Hindu occultism. My researches were made not only amongst modern books and ancient texts and living men. They were also made in the mysterious within-ness of my own consciousness.

I wish, therefore, to put before readers the fundamentals of this hidden philosophy in concise form and plain phrasing... put them in possession of the basic principles and provide them with an Ariadne's thread to guide them through the maze of life and its problems of reflection and experience. Nay, even if I fail to do this but succeed in kindling within them something of the love of Truth, that passionate quest for the meaning of all of life, all experience and all this wonderful world, I shall have accomplished enough to justify our coming together in these pages.