

Overview

"... 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...."

—Paul Brunton

The Mystery

Most people rely on the materialistic science, which is denying that we have any other reality than the body, declaring that the body is our real self and that the brain produces our consciousness.

Paul Brunton — or *PB* as he called himself — says:

"... The materialistic notion that individual centres of intelligent life could have been produced by non-intelligent "matter" is an utter absurdity."

"Hidden away in every man there exists a being immeasurably superior to the ordinary person that he is,"
says *PB*.

He shows convincingly that there is a Higher consciousness within me and that it is my real self — not only in some distant future — but Here and Now.

"The Overself is the inner or true self of man, reflecting the divine being and attributes. The Overself is an emanation from the ultimate reality but is neither a division nor a detached fragment of it. It is a ray shining forth but not the sun itself."

The Overself is unborn and undying, it never changes, it is always present, it has no flaws and no limitation — and is the same for all.

"There is only one Overself for the whole race, but the point of contact with it is special and unique, and constitutes man's higher individuality."

The Overself is real because it is always the same. The feeling that I exist is the same throughout my life. It has its source in the Higher Consciousness.

"What we commonly think of as constituting the 'I' is an idea which changes from year to year. This is our personal 'I'. But what we feel most intimately as being always present in all these different ideas of the 'I', that is, the sense of being, of existence, never changes at all. It is this which is our true enduring 'I'."

The ego illusion

What is the ego?

It is a bunch of thoughts and feelings, memories, fears and hopes for the future, conscious and unconscious habits, tendencies and experiences — as well as the body.

The ego gets its life and its consciousness from the Soul.

“The ego self is the creature born out of man’s own doing and thinking, slowly changing and growing ...”

From morning to evening am I busy with this limited and changing ego — which many people wrongly think of as their real I.

Paul Brunton has a better message. The Overself is my true identity.

“... some of the confusion is due to the fact that the ego is a changing thing; it changes with time and experience, whereas the Infinite Being, the Ultimate, is changeless ...”

“To know what his real I is not, is a first and most important step toward knowing what it really is. Indeed, it has a liberating effect.”

We live, at the same time, on two levels of consciousness — paradoxically without knowing it. The lower, the ego-level, is known by everyone while the higher, the Overself or the Soul, is unknown for most people.

“Keep on thinking about the differences between the personal ego and the impersonal Overself until you become thoroughly familiar with them.”

If I don't have a correct idea of what my true identity is, of what I am, it cannot be avoided that I make mistakes contradicting my real interests – decisions and acts creating new negative karma delaying my spiritual awakening.

The turning point

Family and friends, work and leisure-time activities, fill my days. All this gives my life meaning for a long time. But one day a question may arise:

Was this all?

The feeling that something very important is missing in my life, can be very strong.

“It is both the irony and tragedy of life that we use up its strictly limited quota of years in pursuits which we come later to see as worthless and in desires which we find bring pain with their fulfilment. The dying man, who sees the cinema-film of his past flash in review before his mental eyes, discovers this irony and feels this tragedy.”

I want my life on earth to have a happier ending. Can the tragedy be avoided? PB has the given us the answer.

"When our eyes have been opened to the true meaning of man, when we know that this is not to be found in his transient personality but in his enduring essence, life will possess a quality it never had before."

"Our source is in the Overself; our growth is but a return to it, made fully conscious as we were not before."

"In first, the discovery of the Overself, and second, the surrender to it, man fulfils the highest purpose of his life on this earth."

"We fulfil life when we find ourselves in the divine presence unendingly, aware of it and expressing it."

On the Long Path

The groundwork is done. I know what I am — and what I am not.

The Philosophic Building Blocks on the Long and the Short Path deal with widely different subjects, all of which are important on the quest.

Let's start with the Long Path — where the ego is in the center.

On the Long Path I am developing the ego, its attitudes, character and abilities. But however long and hard I work with these things, I will never reach beyond the ego itself. I walk in a circle in its limited world.

"The constant movement of thoughts and the ego's fascination with itself hide from us the divine Overself, from which both are derived."

On the Long Path I learn meditation. I must also detect which the hindrances are that block my way to the spiritual awakening — and then remove them!

"The quest is a deliberate attempt to shorten the passage from life in the underself to life in the Overself. Therefore it involves a constant discipline of actions, feelings, thoughts and words."

On the Short Path

"Whatever path a man starts with, he must at the end of it come to the entrance of this path — the destruction of the illusion of the ego and giving up identification with it," says PB.

The Short Path — where the Overself is in the center — disregards the ego. My attention is now focused on the Soul. It is on the Short Path that the spiritual awakening will happen.

"His old centre in the ego has mysteriously gone. His new centre in the Overself has taken its place."

"The Short Path calls for a definite change of mind, a thinking of totally new thoughts, a fastening of attention upon the goal instead of the way to it. It calls for a revolution, dethroning the ego from being the centre of attention and replacing it by the Overself."

"First there must be intellectual understanding of the truth of his real being, then he can advance to the practices which lead to its realization."

The practices on the Short Path have nothing to do with ego.

"The basis of Short Path practices is that the mind is like a transparent crystal which takes on the colour of what is brought into propinquity with it" says PB. "By turning the mind away from the ego, even from its improvement, and towards the Overself, uplift results."

The most important of the Short Path exercises is "The Remembrance exercise", which is about reminding myself all the time of my true identity. When I remember the Soul the ego is ignored.

"The best way to honour this immense truth of the ever-present reality of the Overself is to remember it-- as often, as continuously, and as determinedly as possible. It is not only the best way but also the most rewarding one. For then its saving grace may bestow great blessing."

"... the door upon which you may have been knocking a long time in vain will open to your frequent loving remembrances."

"... this practice of constant remembrance of the Overself purifies the mind and gradually renders it naturally introverted, concentrates and eventually illumines it."

About the "As if-exercise", PB says:

"This practice of picturing oneself as one ought to be, of visualizing the man free from negative qualities and radiant with positive ones that are part of the quest's ideal, has near-magical results."

The third exercise, the "Witness exercise", is about impartially observing myself — to stand beside myself.

"His role is to play witness of what he is, how he behaves, the thoughts he admits, just as if he were witnessing someone else ..."

The witness attitude will gradually have the effect that I identify myself with the whole. I understand that unity is the fundamental reality.

Born again

Towards the end of the Short Path, the longing after the Soul becomes stronger and stronger, it gives me no rest. I am drawn deeper and deeper into the love and wisdom, peace and freedom of the Soul.

"We are like flowers torn from our natural soil and suffering the misery of separation," says PB, "our fervid mystical yearnings represent the recognition of our need to reunite with our Source."

The work on the two paths is my own responsibility. The quest comes to an end with the help of Grace.

Enlightenment comes suddenly. The dominance of the ego is gone forever. The highest purpose of my life on earth is fulfilled.

"This is the spiritual climax of one's life, this dramatic moment when consciousness comes to recognize and understand itself."

"The sage is a man who lives in constant truth-remembrance. He has realized the existence of the Overself, he knows that he partakes of its life, immortal and infinite ..."

A noble task

Paul Brunton devoted his life to service of humanity. His writings inspire people around the world to a higher, ego-free life.

Now he asks all who are benefiting by these ideas to help make them available to others.