

CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
January 15, 1982
EPISTEMOLOGY; IMAGINATION
PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE IMAGINATION

TOPIC: Epistemology
SUBJECT: Imagination

SUBSUBJECTS: Productive and Reproductive Imagination, Soul, Bodhicitta, Astrology, Incarnation

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BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*

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NOTES:

- **RETYPE PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT (hence V10).** From 1982 0115P-06R17.PDF. THERE ARE NO AUDIO CASSETTE TAPES EXTANT.

- We have two duplicate scans for this class, 1982 0115 - Productive Imagination Paper 06R00.PDF and 1982 0115P-06R17.PDF. The first one has “1/13 or 1/15?” written underneath 1/15/82, has Jan written in the upper right-hand corner, and has some scattered student handwriting throughout.
- Originally typed by CdA.
- 1982 01/15 is a Friday.
- This class is a prelude to the alchemy series.
- Selected in 2022 for possible inclusion in a book of Anthony Damiani inspirational essays, in honor of his 100th birthday.

1982 01/15 at Wisdom's Goldenrod

Epistemology; Imagination; Productive and Reproductive Imagination

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1/15/82 Productive and Reproductive Imagination

The productive imagination produces the body as an organ (the image of the body), which becomes the medium through which it must work. That is the body as the reflecting apparatus, and included in that reflective apparatus are all the archetypes which are embedded in the body itself. So if something is coming through the productive imagination it must be refracted by the archetypal structure of the body (vasanas). Now you have reflective imagination. P.B. asked this same question: what is the difference between my thought of the chair and the chair itself? He goes on to say that there is not a difference in kind, but a difference in quality -- the intensity of the apprehension. At the moment the productive imagination is working, you are not aware of its functioning, therefore you deny that you are doing it. But that apprehension requires the ability to catch that first moment. There has to be a sentinel placed at the gates of your introspective imagination.

The Buddhists constantly point out the need to go over the reasoning processes that have been left behind by the Sages, by which you can come to understand the truths they were speaking about. They ask you to go over this again and again until you assimilate it thoroughly. If you follow this, your reflective consciousness is forced to conform to that reasoning process, and it is like you are remodeling your reflective awareness according to these proper channels of reasoning. Until you are saturated with the doctrine the insight into mentalism won't take place. So this is to help us transform the reflective imagination until a river bed is made in the structure of your mind.

In terms of the symbolism we are working with, we would say the reason principles which are being manifested through that productive imagination are reason principles that are ordering, structuring, and manifesting the immaterial knowledge which is implicit in that very production. It exists alongside of that production. The work is to conform to and recognize the validity of these reason principles which are laws that govern manifestation.

What is really being said is that the mind is what makes and is constantly making our karma for us. Because of the way it is operating it accepts certain patterns and keeps operating in that way. We ourselves are the makers and the heirs of the functioning of our minds. We instantiate the kind of thinking that is going on. It is you that can stop and inhibit the responding reaction. At the point before your reaction sets in, you have to cut off the reflective imagination and everything it is based on.

Corbin [*Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*] p. 188 "That is why man's Active Imagination cannot be a vain fiction, since it is this same theophanic Imagination which, in and by the human being, continues to reveal what it showed itself by first imagining it.

"This imagination can be termed "illusory" only when it becomes opaque and loses its transparency. But when it is *true* to the divine reality it reveals, it liberates, provided that we recognize the function with which Ibn 'Arabi endowed it and which it alone can perform; namely, the function of effecting a *coincidentia oppositorum*."

You are not only the participant and coordinator but you are the one that is imagining forth this universe. As we have spoken in the past, you are thinking hardness into existence. What is Kant saying when he says that the mind--which includes within itself the concepts, the abstract categories--thinks, and in the very thinking transforms itself into a phenomena? You as an individual mind are really conjoined with this cosmic production.

The productive imagination fabricates the body that it is going to work with (the inherent structure, the *vasanas*). This is where the individual karma is carried. The soul can only select the kind of a body that would accord with the karma of that soul that is working to produce that body. Insofar as the productive imagination proceeds to produce the body through which it is going to operate with, the experiences it extracts from that in turn have a reciprocal reaction on the productive imagination, leaving it in the next incarnation to choose a different set of *vasanas*. This liberating or transforming experience can go on in the present life, but that is very optimistic. It generally takes time. The experience of being liberated from the reflective consciousness is similar to the experience of the Witness I. So the Witness I would include within itself the subject-object relationship, but not as divided, opposed. That distinction is cancelled out. The unitary aspect that the presentation now has releases you from the anxieties the ego is working with.

Being liberated from the reflective awareness does not cancel out or annihilate the reflective awareness, but one is no longer tyrannized by it, which would mean practically the cessation of the functioning of the *vasanas* that are inherent in the bodily structure. So if you transfer your viewpoint from thinking that you are the dream subject to that of the dreamer, you wouldn't have anguish anymore. But that doesn't mean that the dream should stop -- it has to continue. You have identified with the Witness I but that is my body that I'm working through and it really isn't distinct and separate from the total image within which I perceive this going on. P.B. has noted the need and necessity at a certain point for students of philosophy to have a couple of experiences of the Witness I. It is an absolute imperative.

Corbin p. 219 "Ibn 'Arabi distinguishes an imagination *conjoined* to the imagining subject and inseparable from him and a self-subsisting imagination *dissociable* from the subject. In the first case we must distinguish between the imaginations that are premeditated or provoked by a conscious process of the mind, and those which present themselves to the mind spontaneously like dreams (or daydreams). The specific character of this conjoined Imagination is its inseparability from the imagining subject, with whom it lives and dies. The Imagination separable from the subject, on the other hand, has an autonomous and subsisting reality *sui generis* on the plane of the intermediary world, the world of Idea-Images."

This is one of the reasons the creative visualization exercise is so important. When you can construct an image with the faculties of your mind, and that image can persist right there with your eyes wide open, you can see this which you have imagined. In this exercise, when you can actually do that, you would have a difficult time to say that it isn't you that constructed the world, because now the identification is more on the side of the productive imagination.

You're having a dream; your imagination is self-subsistent. It could exist independently of the dream subject that you brought into being. That dream subject could disappear. You as a self-subsisting imagining entity could go on and create another dream subject. So the reflective imagination is what Ibn 'Arabi is referring to as the empirical subject, and the productive imagination is the self-subsistent entity.

The faculty of the productive imagination belongs to the soul, its embodiment is what is sent forth. The Sun in Aquarius is a power of the soul which remains with the soul. What is sent forth is the sensible sun, the sun as imaged. It is the same for the human being.

The angular relationship of the planets and the ideas which are thus incorporated reveals the level of the soul incarnating at that time. The planetary configuration in the heavens is a symbol, and adequate representation of the soul unembodied. The powers functioning in the body would then be an image of the functioning of the powers of the soul, but here we will need more precision.

In the sense that his fragment of life is projected out from the soul, it is this fragment of the Divine essence which will eventually evolve from a germ to the flowering of human intelligence -- Sagehood. This becomes a reflection or a mirror which reflects the divine essence. There is not umbilical cord attached between them. That is the mystery. How can we possibly conceive that this fragment contains within itself and will unfold through the eons of time all its potential, and not be that soul which remains forever in the Intellectual?

As we said, the Demiurge is the same as the abiding soul -- soul as contemplating the Divine Wisdom, and soul as fabricating the universe. That soul says "I bequeath to you part of my immortal essence" (put that in the 1st house). The mystery of mysteries is that this fragment of life, the Bodhicitta, reaches the level of Buddhahood, which means it is like a reflection in the world of the soul in the Intellectual.

This knowing of the proper time for incarnation is not a reflectively conscious act. By its very being every soul is near to its image in the Intellectual and at the proper time it doesn't have to be transported there. There is no interval between the soul and its embodiment. It would be the higher soul that would know all the pentads of time and which in some sense has an algebraic formula as to the periods in which it could incarnate to assimilate the meanings that are necessary for that second soul to eventually grow and become that image. So it would be the higher soul that knows, as it knows the contents of the Intelligible world. So when they say this soul is a number, what would they mean? I suspect that within the soul is already paradigmatically contained the essence of the entirety of manifestations necessary for that Bodhicitta to achieve that statues necessary for it. So it has all the numbers within itself. But number here would mean practically all the degree symbols, it would have an understanding of the ideas in the Nous, and the appropriate intervals that the Bodhicitta would have to incarnate. So the configuration which it picks at birth is in accord with that idea it has within itself.

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