

**CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
October 6, 1982
PB PARAS; EGO**

TOPIC: PB Paras
SUBJECT: Ego

SUBSUBJECTS: Identity vs. Continuity, Reincarnation

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BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Paul Brunton, *Notebooks*. 16 vols; Vol. 1 entitled *Perspectives* [*Persp.*], published 1984-1988. Some Paul Brunton Notebook paras are, as of 2018, unpublished, and are noted as such.
- Paul Brunton, *The Wisdom of the Overself*
- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: V.3.4

NOTE: Earlier transcript versions exist.

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1982 10/06 at Wisdom's Goldenrod

PB Paras; Ego

Readable Edited Transcript

PB PARAS ON EGO

[Audio File 1982 1006a Begins]

AD: --they're occurring, but they're not very many. (laughter) At any rate there's one that Randy picked out which has a sense of humor, I thought you'd like to hear it. I'm stealing Randy's cannon but it's alright.

PB: "Everyone is already practising devotion to his own ego: he loves and surrenders to it. If by enquiry and reflection, by art or meditation, he arrives at the discovery that the essential being of "I" is none other than "He," and penetrates it deeply and constantly until he becomes established in the new identity, his ego dissolves by itself. Thenceforward he fulfils his highest duty as a man." (8.4.402)

AD: It's just misplaced devotion. There's just short pieces in here. There isn't too much.

PB: "The ego is here, ever at work and present even when it is supposed to be absent." (8.4.311)

PB: "What or who is seeking enlightenment? It cannot be the higher Self, for that is itself of the nature of Light. There then only remains the ego! This ego, the object of so many denunciations and denigrations, is the being that, transformed, will win truth and find Reality even though it must surrender itself utterly in the end as the price to be paid." (Persp. p. 97 & 8.4.435)

AD: We'll read a few.

PB: "The question arises: Is it possible to approach life with a mentality free from egoism? This is a question that philosophy has taken very seriously and it says: If the wish exists and the effort is made, there will at least be a less egoistic approach than there would otherwise be. It has therefore evolved a system of training the mind and feelings which, relatively and as far as is humanly possible, does free the human being from excessively egoistic approaches to Truth." (8.4.158)

PB: "Every discussion which is made from an egoistic standpoint is corrupted from the start and cannot yield an absolutely sure conclusion. The ego puts its own interest first and twists every argument, word, even fact to suit that interest." (Persp. p. 103 & 8.4.102)

PB: "So long as the little self feels itself wise enough to make all its decisions and solve all its problems, so long will there be a barrier between it and the Higher Power." (8.4.28)

(Q: the following is from Yellow Vinyl, Category 8, p. 34)

PB: "A.B. suggests that it is nonsense to advise questers: kill, rise above or abandon the ego. This is an impossible task, for what is going to carry on their life in the world? " (unpublished, yv/34/1)

PB: "Should he attempt to repudiate what is the strongest part of himself--the ego--he is likely to find how strongly attached are his desires. He has transferred the object of his attentions from the worldly sphere to the spiritual sphere, but the ego is still active. When his meditation comes to the threshold of

Truth, he stops, terrified by the feeling that he is losing his very self. His little personal world is the subject that really interests him.” (8.4.271)

PB: “The personal ego is not a metaphysically permanent thing. But it is a practical working tool which serves the convenient purpose of personal identification. It need not be denied. Why call it non-existent, a fictitious entity, while making full use of it?” (8.2.43)

PB: “The ego is defiant, cunning, and resistant to the end.” (Persp. p. 106 & 8.3.78)

PB: “The I-sense is changeless and is always there so long as thoughts and feelings appear. It is those moods and . . . with shift from one change to another, not the “I” itself.” (unpublished, yv/35/1)

PB: “The body’s sense-organs demand satisfactions, but at the root of their desires is the ego, a whorl of emotional-mental tendencies.” (8.3.14)

PB: “His aim being the contrary of most people’s aims, he tries to depersonalize his attitudes and reactions. What relief he feels with even partial freedom from the burden of self-consciousness. How heavy a load is borne by those who see, sense, or react with ego-centered nervousness.” (2.6.3 & 6.2.183)

PB: “The ego is the shadow-self accompanying the light-self, or Overself. The ego holds all that is dark in the man’s character.” (8.3.15)

PB: “To advise a man always to remove the ego when considering a situation where a moral judgement is needed is fatuous and futile. It is like telling a man to lift himself up by his own trouser braces.” (8.4.272)

PB: “The ego sees its own picture of the world, coloured by its own characteristics and contained within its own limitations. Because of that it seldom sees people as they really are.” (8.4.99)

PB: “Each one is tightly enclosed in his ego which dictates his thought and action and keeps out the unwelcomed truth.” (unpublished, yv/36/6)

PB: “The ego can mask its desire for power and prominence with a concern for the service of humanity.” (8.3.75)

PB: “The little ego naturally frets about its future.” (unpublished, yv/37/4)

PB: “We have to accept the fact that most people have an immense capacity for being quite comfortable within the limits of the ego, and have no wish to get away from them to a higher level.” (8.4.130)

PB: “To nullify the ego is the only way to perceive and identify his real being.” (8.4.461)

AD: I’m just reading the short selections, I’m going to leave you the two big volumes.

PB: “The animal that he is must be kept at bay; his freedom as a man must be gained by degrees.” (6.4.29)

AD: Randy, you’d better read them, I can’t read them. Oh, just in case you should run out... I think they’re all there. We’ll read a few more and then we’ll stop and discuss it, alright? Just build up the atmosphere, the anxiety.

(Q: now Randy reads)

PB: “. . . The wave, too, since it forms itself only on the surface of the water gives no indication in its tiny stature of the tremendous depth and breadth and volume of water beneath it.

“Consider that no wave exists by itself or for itself, that all waves are inescapably parts of the visible ocean. In the same way, no individual life can separate itself from the All-Life but is always a part of it in some way or other. Yet the idea of separateness is held by millions. This idea is an illusion. From it springs their direct troubles. The work of the quest is simply this: to free the ego from its self-imposed limitations, to let the wave of conscious being subside and straighten itself out into the waters whence it came. The little wave is thus reconverted into the infinite Overself.” (8.1.102, not all of para read in class)

PB: “However insignificant it be in the eyes of others, the ego carries itself with an air of grotesque self-importance. However trivial its problems, they are vast to its own thinking.” (8.3.167)

PB: “The uniqueness of each person, his difference from every other person, may be metaphysically explained as due to the effort of Infinite Mind to express itself infinitely within the finite limitation of time and space, form and appearance.” (25.1.157)

PB: “How is it that I am, and know . . . (para moved later)

PB: “Everyone can give his assent to the statement that his physical environment is not himself, but it requires great penetration to give his assent to the equally true statement that his thoughts are not himself.” (8.1.71)

PB: “Give up the outer illusions and gain the inner reality. Give up considering the body as the self and gain the awareness of the Overself.” (8.4.238)

PB: “The truth affronts his egoism, for if accepted, it leaves him crushed and enfeebled.” (8.4.395)

PB: “The ego has very powerful defenses, mostly emotional ones, to which it turns instantaneously.” (8.3.105)

PB: “Only the deepest kind of reflection, or the most exciting kind of mystical experience, or the compelling force of a prophet’s revelation can bring a man to the great discovery that his personal ego is not the true centre of his being.” (Persp. p. 103 & 8.4.265)

PB: “If a man could withdraw sufficiently from his ego to stop letting its interest and desires overpower him, he would thereby let peace come to triumph in his heart. The true paradise, the real heavenly kingdom, which has been postponed by an ignorant clergy to the post-mortem world, thus becoming far-off and elusive, is in fact as near to us as are our own selves, and as present as today. If we are to enter it, we can and must enter while yet in the flesh. It is not a time or place but a state of life and a stage of development. It is the ego-free life. The ego is not asked to destroy itself but to discipline itself. The personal in a man must live, but only as a slave to the impersonal. These two identities make up his self.” (8.1.208)

THE EGO IS THE SEEKER BUT NEVER THE FINDER OF TRUTH; TRANSFORMING THE EGO, NOT GETTING RID OF IT

AD: Do you want to stop and discuss for a few minutes? Any of the things that have been read?

PC: Could you read again the one about the ego being the seeker of the truth?

RC: The one that says that it is the ego that seeks the truth?

AD: Isn't that obvious?

PC: I came across another quote that I was wondering about in relation to this one.

AD: You got it? Out with it.

PB: "Although we may grant the fact that it is the ego which is seeking truth, we must insist on the completing truth that the ego is never the finder of truth." (8.4.440)

AD: There's no conflict. That's fine. Now find the other quote.

VM: Peter, this might be something to add to that:

PB: "How can the ego's self-effort bring about the grand illumination? It can only clear the way for it, cleanse the vehicle of it, and remove the weaknesses that shut it out. But the light of wisdom is a property of the innermost being--the Soul--and therefore this alone can bring it to a man. How can the ego give or attain something which belongs to the Overself? It cannot. Only the divine can give the divine. That is to say, only by grace can illumination be attained, no matter how ardently he labours for it." (18.5.162)

AD: Here's the other quote, Peter.

PB: "What or who is seeking enlightenment? It cannot be the higher Self, for that is itself of the nature of Light. There then only remains the ego! This ego, the object of so many denunciations and denigrations, is the being that, transformed, will win truth and find Reality even though it must surrender itself utterly in the end as the price to be paid." (repeat)

AD: You don't get the truth until you pay the price and that means you get rid of the ego.

PC: But that says the ego transformed will win truth.

AD: Yes. The ego transformed, disciplined, purified, etc. It is THAT which will win truth.

PC: But then he says in the other quote that the ego will NOT find truth.

AD: No, the ego cannot find truth because obviously the way it will get the truth is when it gives itself up. Now when it gives itself up there's no ego that wins the truth. You want the truth, you get rid of your ego. But at the same time you're not going to get rid of your ego until you have sufficiently developed it, purified it and brought it under the higher discipline, the higher philosophy.

RG: But it's just in that sense you mean "get rid"?

AD: Actually you don't get rid of it, you have to transform it. Remember he made the point over and over again that the ego has to be evolved, matured. It won't be capable of that sacrifice until it does reach that maturity.

PC: But if there's an enlightenment present though which was not present all along, it must be in the ego that that has occurred, although not by the ego.

AD: But it wouldn't be the unregenerate ego any more. I thought the other quote that was interesting . . . maybe the Buddhists may have picked it up . . . about this notion about identity. Remember? He says "How come I can remember what I'd done a year ago?" Remember that quote?

[Note: Maybe put this Q. first in transcript; quote not read here but earlier in the class.]

PB VS. BUDDHIST EXPLANATION OF IDENTITY; DYNAMIC NATURE OF TENDENCIES

PB: "How is it that I am--and know that I am--substantially the same man today as yesterday, that I remember the happenings of a year ago? The answer must be that there is a continuous self, or being, or mind, in me, distinct from its thoughts or experiences." (8.1.97)

AH: There was an underlying mind or consciousness?

AD: There was an underlying consciousness which was self-identical with itself? He didn't say it was thought that remembered itself. I thought that was interesting. In other words the Buddhist explanation would be that it is thought that remembers a previous thought, and is a thought, so to speak, in its own right. Whereas what PB is saying you have these two streams, or let's say two juxtapositions. You have the evolving stream of thought which we're calling the ego and a light which permeates that evolving stream of thought and it is constantly there although it's unaware of the ego. Now the Buddhists explain memory or self-identity in terms of the self-continuing stream of thought. He's not doing that. He's saying no, the identity belongs to the person, the one who is underlying that stream of thought, and it's not to be confused with the stream of thought.

AH: The Buddhist explanation is that each thought moment contains...

AD: ...contains the possibility of a recollection of its prior activity, or prior whatever.

AH: This is more of a Vedantic view I think.

AD: No it's more PB.

AH: It's like the question of how you know in the morning that you slept well.

AD: Yes but the point here would be that PB is falling back on the explanation of continuity and discontinuity. The Buddhists can fall back on the explanation of just discontinuity.

AH: In that quote Anthony, what does he call that underlying consciousness?

AD: The Overself. That's the higher self. That's what tethers together the stream of thoughts, the continuum that is constantly changing.

AH: The other quote refers to the fact that the ego is in no wise eternal, or doesn't conquer death. Do you think the Overself does? Is that implied? The stream that underlies thought, is that for one life?

AD: The stream that underlies thought?

AH: This consciousness, this Overself? That underlies thought, that allows memory to be possible, does that transcend one life?

AD: Oh yes, that's self-identical.

AH: Does it have a relationship with the "I"?

AD: It IS the basis for the feeling of "I" that you have.

AH: But it is in no way associated with any kind of personal "I".

AD: No. It is the BASIS of the personal "I" that you feel.

AH: But in itself it's not personal.

AD: No.

AH: Is your Overself different than mine?

AD: We'll get into that in the Plotinus class because that's a very difficult question. The Hindu theory or the Vedantic theory is of course that it's all one. Plotinus would say that there are distinctions within it. PB says that there are distinctions and historical connections that a series of incarnations makes TO an Overself, establishes a kind of identity of my Overself which would be different from yours. It's a very complex question which we'll pursue (Q: treat?) in Plotinus, so I'll leave that out here.

AH: I just wanted to be sure what that quote implies. Is it in any way related to a quote in the *Wisdom* where he talks about, "The first of our thoughts is "I"?" [Note: See Paul Brunton, *The Wisdom of the Overself*, "The Secret of the I," p. 79, Rider 1943 edition.]

AD: Yes, you CAN RELATE it to that, but you don't have to go back to that. You can just use this quote, which is very self-explanatory, very clear. Could you find it again.

PB: "How is it that I am--and know that I am--substantially the same man today as yesterday, that I remember the happenings of a year ago? The answer must be that there is a continuous self, or being, or mind, in me, distinct from its thoughts or experiences." (repeat)

RC: If that weren't so you couldn't remember. Do you think it could explain how you can remember?

AD: Alright. Let's read some more.

DB: I had a question about the quote which was read earlier about the cunning scheming plotting quality of the ego. I don't remember...

PB: "The ego is defiant, cunning, and resistant to the end." (repeat)

DB: Right. OK. Now. That's kind of indisputable but the thing I'm curious about is what makes it necessary for it to be so cunning. How does it know enough to know that it has to be cunning in order to perpetuate itself? Its whole purpose seems to be to insist on the separateness of identity and yet it does that within the context of knowing that that state is a very perilous position. I don't understand where it gets that perspective.

AD: Being cunning?

DB: Yes.

AD: If you say that the ego is the sum total of the tendencies left behind from previous existences and you start from the time that you were an amoeba and work your way up through the tree of life, by this time you would have acquired every trick in the book.

DB: OK, but--

AD: "Cunning" is a British understatement.

DB: Where does the ego get the notion that there is something transcendent to it that it is going to have to resist.

VM: I don't think it does. If the ego had an awareness of the higher self, then it wouldn't be the ego.

JfL: How does it know there's a threat?

VM: Why can't we just say it's the instinct for self preservation in the fullest sense? After all its manifestations from amoebas to the present, it has a certain momentum that it wants to maintain.

DD: On the one hand we talk about it as a matrix of thoughts. On the other hand, it acts. Where does its dynamism come from?

RG: Thought doesn't have that capacity?

DD: Well it may, but I want to pin it down. I want to know where this dynamism . . .

AD: It's inherent when you say tendency. Otherwise you're thinking of tendency as a very static concept. If I could employ that rolled up paper that I put under the bed. Then I take it out and I stretch it and it rolls up again. Very dynamic. It keeps fighting all the way. Don't think of thought, don't think of the residue of past existences as incapable of that profound dynamism. It's so profound that we can hardly withstand it. I mean we accept it as absolutely natural to our being. Just like your eyelids close and things like that. Very profound dynamism. In biology they use the term tropism. The other term would be irritability of protoplasm. (laughter) You haven't spoken to enough Virgos.

AH: Its activity, its dynamism is part of its own in-built defense mechanism. Its activity has to be perpetual. If you were to stop only for an instant...

AD: It's fundamental to the matrix.

AH: It doesn't even like to slow down.

AD: Even the sage loves his existence. He may not want to continue it one moment after he's supposed to not continue it, but up to that moment he loves his existence, just like an ant, or an amoeba . . . fundamental facts of life. Alright let's read some more.

LD: Why can't those very tendencies themselves be spoken of as the identity and not the light.

AD: The identity?

LD: Of the person.

AD: If by person you mean the ego self, yes. You can speak about that as his identity, but would you be satisfied with that?

LD: No, but I'm thinking that we spoke of this consciousness lighting up this matrix of thoughts, and why can't the moment to moment, why can't in each effect the previous cause be inherent in it and then you don't have to speak of the consciousness as lighting this up?

AD: I know what you're saying but...

LD: I'm talking about something in causality which is way over my head.

AD: First of all, it is that light penetrating into the psyche which is the basis for your supposition that you are an "I," a real "I." It is not the psyche's functioning in terms of itself that would ever come out and say "I am I." It's not inherent in thought itself to conceive of itself as a subject. It's inherent in the light which permeates that thought. And then another reason why thought couldn't be an "I" is because it's not permanent, it's constant, it's going through a constant process of change from moment to moment.

LD: Yes but the previous moment is continually present in a way.

AD: You've been reading too many Buddhist books. The whole point that was being made there is that you won't find any continuity in one thought, in the next thought following that. I mean you won't find any identity there, you'll find some sort of discontinuous continuity, but not an "I". And you have to discriminate between the thought and the subject of that thought. And in this case the ego and its thought are both objects to that consciousness. It's that consciousness where you get the feeling of "I". You don't get it from the psychical processes.

LD: I hear that, but I can't really say that I'm the same person every day; there's somewhat of an identity there but there's some difference too.

AD: What is the difference, the fact that you're a day older? That would be the difference, so then you're speaking about the entirety of everything that's objective. In other words, if you think of yourself as different, you're thinking about something objective. Right?

LD: I guess so.

AD: No. You should be very clear about this.

LD: It would have to be content.

AD: It would have to be content. It would have to be objective. Now how would a subject that is truly subjective know itself? Can it know itself in that way, yes, through being objective to itself? In any way it can be objective, it can't be you. It can only be, so to speak, some material idea. Some idea--let me leave out "material."

LD: Yes--it sounds nice when (you say it?). (laughter)

AD: This was exactly the reason why I brought this out in this discussion, that in that statement (Q: made in the quote read earlier) PB made it very clear where he stands as far as the doctrine. He points out that thought is, so to speak, going on all the time. The Buddhists say that all we are, are these thoughts, one

after the other, and that if you ask them for an explanation of the self-identity of the entity they would place it in that thought. Now PB is very deliberately pointing out, that's not where you're identity is coming from because that is a mechanical process, that thought following upon thought. He's placing the subjectivity in the Consciousness, and he's making no bones about it.

LD: Could that point of view also be attacked by looking at the interval between two moments in some way as the consciousness?

AD: Yes. You could think of it that way. But what about the-- what about the interval, it's not there?

LD: No, it definitely is...

AD: It still goes there. OK. But that was the whole point. That was why I brought that out. Because this is a doctrinal question. And many people actually follow the Buddhist way of thinking and say "I am composed of thought, all I am is thought." Well that's fine. The only thing is, the "I" can't be included in thought, it isn't thought.

AH: I don't want to debate the point but there's no place in thought that you can find that permanent "I."

AD: It's not something you could find, because if it was it would be something objective.

AH: So as long as you can't find it, why worry about it?

AD: Well I can't find any microbes but I know that if I got smallpox they'll quarantine this place.

AH: It's just that if I analyze my experience...

AD: You can't analyze by experience if there's microbes there. You're making the test of reality what he would call the "fingertip philosophy." "I can't find an "I," therefore it's not around."

RG: Yeah Andrew, what do you mean by findable by analysis?

AD: How big a telescope will you need?

RG: The whole claim of findable by analysis predisposes the question to find something that's analytical, and that's exactly the thing that isn't analytical. It seems like such an empty argument. You're already predisposing the findability of thing by what's going to be analyzed rather than seeing if there is something other than an analytical content demanded to be known.

AD: Let me put it this way Andrew to amplify that. By that by which you smell, taste, hear, see, think. How are you going to find it? Alright, let's read some more.

EGO AND ITS WORLD; REINCARNATION

PB: "Such is this relativity of all things to their knower that because the world we experience is *our* mental world, we never see the world as it really is in itself or as a being who was observing it from outside would observe it. The consequence is that we never see the world without unconsciously seeing it mixed up with the self. The "I" plus something other than the "I" constitute our field of consciousness. We never know the world-in-itself but only the world-in-a-state-of-interaction-with-the- self. We never know the self-in-itself but only the self-in-a-condition-of-interaction-with-the-world. Such are the actual

and compulsory conditions of the so-called experience of the world and our so-called experience of the self.” (Persp. p. 234 & 19.1.72)

PB: “What does experience mean in the light of this analysis? It means not only that the world in itself is never known in isolation but also that the “I” is likewise never isolated.” (19.1.73)

PB: “It would be an error to believe that it is the Overself which reincarnates. It does not. But its offspring--the ego--does.” (Persp. p. 106 & 8.1.232)

AD: Doctrine? Doctrinal? Do you understand what he’s saying? This ego, John Doe, is going to come back again? Well then what does he mean?

VM: The tendencies that are manifesting as the ego in this life, re-manifest in terms of another ego that has some characteristics which are similar.

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1982 1006a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

LD: . . . I don’t know.

AD: That’s the point.

LD: But you say I’ve got the same tendencies.

AD: Yes but tendencies aren’t self-identical. They are only a matrix. They can be combined in a variety of ways, although usually they can be pretty persistent too.

RG: Yes, but what do you mean? There’s got to be some-- there’s an organization of those tendencies that give you--

AD: No. I think the point he’s making here is to recognize that the ego as such is NO PERMANENT ENTITY, to begin with. And therefore when this passes on, when the body passes on, that is decomposed, those tendencies are decomposed. Now what is it that will manifest the next time? It will be certainly some of those tendencies that were in that prior ego. And you will be the heir of the deeds of that ego. But you will not be that ego. You’ll be something other than that ego. The point here is that an animistic conception of reincarnation is being denied. John Doe does not come back and is John Doe again. Nor does the Overself incarnate because that’s not possible.

RG: So what’s being established is a middle term that does reincarnate. Neither the ego of this life nor the Overself which presides over all of them, but some middle term reincarnates.

AD: You pinpoint and try to understand that middle type, that third term.

RG: It seems there’s some type of mind that contains a certain historicity to it that’s associated with each Overself. To speak about it in terms of its tendencies seems to be one part of it, but there also seems to be a continuity there that needs a mind to hold that continuity.

AD: Well I don’t know in what sense you mean “continuity,” that it’s the same stream? Or that I’m nice now, in the next life I’ll be nicer, and in the next one I’ll finally be a saint? You mean that kind of continuity? Because in the next life I might be a bum.

RG: Oh no, not really that kind of continuity, but almost a presiding kind of continuity that somehow includes the totality of incarnations, but not the Overself.

AD: That's exactly what you mean by the sum of tendencies which are deposited by its living.

MB: Couldn't there be a hierarchy among the tendencies?

AD: Oh sure there's a hierarchy, you prefer to eat bread now instead of grass, so the vasanas . . . (laughter drowns out remainder of comment)

MB: I didn't mean which tendencies win out . . . in a particular lifetime, I mean in a principal hierarchy...

AD: Yes there is Myra, that's true. That's why they tell you to try to generate those higher tendencies, reinforce them.

MB: So some of those tendencies which are particularized based on the experience of one lifetime may be lost, but if they're really rooted deeply then they won't be.

AD: If they're continuously reinforced, then you would in a certain sense generate the direction that you want to take.

LR: So what's the answer?

RG: The answer is Virgo rising. (lots of laughter)

LR: Dickie, what do you understand as the entity which reincarnates?

RG: I don't know, in our Taurean kind of way we seem to be wanting to hold on to some kind of entity. Some mind other than the Overself, and yet not the ego.

AD: Don't think of it as an entity.

MB: How can we think of a mind other than the Overself; you already said it would be a mistake to think of more than one mind, so why posit another mind beneath the Overself even if it's higher than the ego? If there is only one mind, why call it a mind?

RG: OK, a vehicle, a sheath, a body. Something that isn't only generated tendencies . . . ?

PB: "The Long Path idea of reincarnation is illusory. The Short Path idea of it is that it is an undulatory wave, a ripple, a movement upward onward and downward. Since there is no ego in reality, there can be no rebirth of it. But we *do* have the *appearance* of a rebirth. Note that this applies to both the mind and body part of the ego: they are like a bubble floating on a stream and then vanishing or like a knot which is untied and vanishes too. We have to accept the presence of this pseudo-entity, the ego--this mental thing born of many many earth-lives--so long as we have to dwell in another mental thing, the body. But we do not have to accept its dominance; we do not have to perpetuate its rule, for all is in the Mind. Where then are the reincarnatory experiences? Appearances which were like cinema shows. They happen in a time and space which were in the mind. The individual who emerged lost the individuality and merged in the timelessness of eternity. This is the unchanging indestructible Consciousness, the Overself." (9.2.220)

(student discussion, including two comments below)

AH: . . . The Overself either incarnates or it doesn't. . . . What is it that incarnates?

RC: One thing he said to me in discussion is that the problem depends on which point of view you're coming from. As long as the ego is operating in a person it exists and that operation has to be accounted for. But ultimately everybody's going to reach the stage where it lapses and then it doesn't have to be accounted for anymore. . . .

AD: I would have to take that paragraph apart, sentence by sentence, because there's a certain ambiguity in it.

RC: I think we should reread a para that we read before also:

PB: "The uniqueness of each person, his difference from every other person, may be metaphysically explained as due to the effort of Infinite Mind to express itself infinitely within the finite limitations of time and space, form and appearance." (repeat)

(interesting conversation, no comment by AD for 2-3 minutes.)

AD: Isn't he simply saying that every type and variety of man that could be expressed by the planetary functioning will so be expressed. Each one would be unique.

RC: The ultimate reality of each one won't be different than the ultimate reality of any other one.

AD: As ultimate reality each, let's say, has none. But, if you think of every person ever born, look at the peculiarity and uniqueness of his natal chart, this infinite variety expresses the World-Mind. You could put it that way. Every possible type is going to be expressed.

[(Q: RC makes a comment, RG reads quote below.)]

PB: "Every individual life . . . is a self-evolving entity moving through time and space. It has meaning, a purpose, and eventually, a fulfilment here. Why then talk of destroying the one with which you are most intimate--your own ego?" (8.1.181)

AD: Go ahead, read it again. (para reread)

ME: Could I ask you a question? It seems that there's a certain problem, or for me a certain dilemma, between one speaking about trying to destroy or overcome the ego in a lifetime and then talking about this reincarnating entity where we say the ego seems to lapse or disappear entirely, and then that ego in one life is not the same as the ego in the next life. It seems like there's some kind of a conflict between saying, "Well, yes you can try and destroy the ego in one life. You might not succeed. And yet it's going to lapse with your death." If you say the ego is a bubble on a stream, or a length of rope if you use those kind of examples, you'll get the implication that there is an annihilation, or that the ego lapses in a sense. And then some other new ego "incarnates," quotes, unquotes, the next time around. You use the same explanation for the after death state as for the state within your own lifetime.

RC: Can we bring in one other quote and then talk about it? It brings in one other dimension we haven't talked about.

PB: “Man, fascinated by his own ego, is always gazing at it, just as Narcissus was fascinated by the image of his own body reflected in the water. Even when he takes to the spiritual quest, the fascination persists: it is only the things and desires that preoccupy the ego which change their names; from being objects of the physical senses they are transferred to emotional, intellectual, and/or psychical fields. These may be praiseworthy and noble in themselves, but they are still within the circle of the ego, although on its finest and highest levels. This is why the Long Path cannot yield enlightenment.” (2.1.201)

(Q: some conversation for about 10 min. without AD comment. Here is a summary: PB seems to speak of the ego in various quotes as spanning a great range, everything from just below pure consciousness down to and including the body. The question seems to be, who or what can we speak of as the evolving entity. Perhaps for the sake of this discussion on reincarnation, we could speak of a matrix of tendencies, a “middle term” as the evolving entity, and reserve the term ‘ego’ for the particular embodied person in a given lifetime. This would allow you to say that neither the ego nor the Overself reincarnates, but rather that it is this matrix of tendencies.)

RC: The quote that says that it is not the ego that reincarnates is in the short path discussion, the one that says that it does, is in the long path discussion, i.e., the Overself doesn’t incarnate but its offspring the ego does. Perhaps it was wrong to bring them onto the floor at once. (Q: this comment is in middle of above summarized conversation & is a paraphrase.)

[Q: Note: find quote in other transcript that says ego does not reincarnate.]

LR: So what would accrue the karma, who is it that accrues the karma?

VM: Those tendencies. The evolution of those tendencies is what you mean by karma.

LR: Who is the being who is responsible?

AD: What are you looking for when you say “who is the being”?

LR: Does the Overself have karma?

AD: We said no. It doesn’t have karma. Its consciousness is an undisturbed, undifferented consciousness, so how could it incarnate. But what are you people really fighting? Do you have difficulty in accepting the fact that’s it’s only a continuity of thoughts, one after the other?

JG: Yes, it makes it very mechanical.

AD: Just look at your everyday life. Isn’t it a compilation of automatisms? Maybe once in a great while something big really happens, you know, your kid has a birthday. Let’s read up a bunch now.

EGO WORSHIPS ITSELF; DEVOTION

(Q: RC reads)

PB: “He must start by admitting with complete frankness that the ego worships not God but itself . . .” (8.3.133)

AD: DO YOU WANT TO READ THAT FOUR TIMES? (Q: RC rereads line twice and then continues quote:)

PB: “He must start by admitting with complete frankness that the ego worships not God but itself, and that it carries this idolatry into a Church, if religious, or onto the Quest, if mystical.” (8.3.133)

AD: If you think that you can exaggerate the value of this bit of information you’re crazy, because if anybody comes over and tells me how much they love God I just walk away.

RC: That seems to be tied right in with that fascination with its own image.

LR: Let’s hear it once more.

AD: We’ve got to hear it once more, four times, four manifestations.

(Q: RC rereads)

AD: Carries it everywhere. Everywhere. No exceptions. Church, philosophies, psychology, business, home, anywhere and everywhere. The only place it can’t carry it, is in the thought-free state.

CD: I think he says in the *Wisdom* that the only true worship is silence. [Note: See Paul Brunton, *The Wisdom of the Overself*, “The Yoga of the Discerning Mind,” p. 247, Rider 1943 edition.]

AD: Yes if you can manage that.

CD: So any feeling of devotion would be ego.

AD: Yes, of course.

CD: So anything that could manifest in the consciousness is the ego.

AD: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, on and on. All the way up. But that doesn’t take away the value of devotion.

JG: In which sense does it not do that?

AD: In the sense that you’re trying to get out of your ego.

RC: Your devotion doesn’t have to be glued onto some image.

AD: As a matter of fact, that would be the ideal way to carry on devotion is not to have any images, and to remain passively what you are.

RC: He seems to make it very clear that the conception of the divine is not any kind of mental form, not any kind of idea that you can become hypnotized by . . .

AD: It’s a virginal mind.

RC: And yet it’s exactly that sort of thing that the ego demands. “I want concrete image, a concrete feeling, something very definitive.” . . .

AD: And we know that those are all states of the ego. Even if the ego is very highly evolved, alright, and has these beautiful aspirations, it’s still within the realm of the ego.

RC: And its whole operation is toward that finitizing agency, and not toward the opening and infinitizing.

JG: What do you mean by finitizing agency?

RC: Producing a defined thought or a defined image, that you can put your hands on.

AD: So let's read just the first phrase once more, five times would be alright.

FIRST CONTACT WITH THE VOID

RC: (rereads) RC reads another quote from meditation section:

PB: "The first contact of the student with the Void will probably frighten him. The sense of being alone--a disembodied spirit--in an immense abyss of limitless space gives a kind of shock to him unless he comes well prepared by metaphysical understanding and well fortified by a resolve to reach the supreme reality. His terror is, however, unjustified. In the act of projecting the personal ego the Overself has necessarily to veil itself from the ego at the same time. Thus ignorance is born." (23.8.35)

Students: So, the act of projecting is necessarily a veiling, ignorance is an active ignoring...

AD: Same thing like in a dream, same thing. You project a dream and you have to distinguish the self or hide yourself from the dream character, otherwise you won't have no dream. It has to hide. Hide and seek. Let's have a bunch.

(Q: RC rereads previous quote on the void:)

PB: "The first contact of the student with . . ."

AD: Let's have them. (Q: meaning questions)

DB: . . . How is metaphysical understanding going to be of use at that point, since that is thought and what is bringing on the terror is the thought-free state. (Q: paraphrased)

RC: It would seem that a proper understanding would predispose you to accept it as bliss rather than to shrink from it in terror.

LR: Wasn't there a comment that it's only after you come out that you have the fear?

AD: No, you could have the fear before too.

LR: But what about in the experience?

AD: No, in the experience there's none.

LR: There's nothing there to experience...

AD: But it's just like--when you approach that threshold it's like you're flying blind for a while. But you set your instruments, you know the way you're going, and you just keep going. It's like setting your instruments, flying blind, you know the course you're taking, and you stay.

RC: You know that the one that would really have the experience, if such an experience could be had, doesn't have anything to be afraid of. The one that's afraid might as well just melt away.

AH: I think that that metaphysical understanding also has associated with it a firm resolve to attain to the self of reality. (more conversation, 2 mins.)

RC: Doesn't Plotinus say something like taking with him only that better part of the soul which is winged for the intellectual act? [Note: See Plotinus, V.3.4, fourth para.]

AD: Well, it's a strange thing, when you get in the void or you're close, there's no place for any thoughts to hide. That's if it's the VOID, there's no place for any thoughts to hide. There's no little nooks or crannies or corners, there's no curtains, there's no place for it to hide. Gotta go. . . . Let's read a bunch now, huh?

MORE PB PARAS ON EGO

(Q: RC reads)

PB: "It requires a mood of real humility for a man to acknowledge that he is in the wrong. Such a mood will benefit him in two ways. It will correct an erroneous course and it will thin down a fat ego." (8.4.346)

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[Audio File 1982 1006b Begins]

PB: "It is no doubt an excellent effort to attempt the ego's curbing, restraining, disciplining, or purifying. But this is only a preliminary and cannot of itself bring enlightenment. Moreover, it is a preliminary that never seems to come to an end. As one fault is removed, a new one created by new circumstances or developments arises. So what is really required is the ego's dissolution. But this cannot be brought about without first acquiring some understanding of what the ego really is." (8.4.365)

AD: That's of course a very beautiful answer to Andrew's question, "Why do we have to know all these things about the ego?" Because if you don't know you're not going to be able to dissolve it, you're not going to be able to attack it.

PB: "What then is this "I"? We take it for granted that there is a single being which thinks, feels and acts, which is separate from all other selves, and different from them in many ways. But what is this thing we call our personal self? Can we intellectually lay definite hold on it?" (unpublished, 11v/13/45)

PB: "All are ready to justify self and judge others; few are ready to judge self and justify others." (8.3.111)

PB: "When consciousness is too absorbed in the personal ego, it is unable to remember the Overself." (unpublished, 11v/14/43)

PB: "All our relations with others will be markedly affected by the way we use our own ego and function in it." (8.4.63)

PB: "The essence of man is perfect, but the ego of man is not." (8.1.50)

PB: "No aspirant knows how much the ego can do to deceive his mind with fantasy and to mislead his steps with vanity." (8.3.69)

PB: "Only when the ego has withered away can he know what real inner peace is." (8.4.24)

PB: "Take it as a truism that nearly every man is in love with himself. If the divine influence is to enter and touch him, much more if it is to possess him, he must be deprived of this self-love." (8.3.134)

PB: "In one sense, the ego is a corruption of divine consciousness, as well as a diminution of it." (8.1.121)

EGO AS CORRUPTION OF DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS

LC: It sounds like one way or the other you can't get away from the fact that the ego is somehow joined to divine consciousness.

RC: I don't think you'd call it an ego without that consciousness being present. I think the presence of that consciousness is what makes it an ego and not a mass of tendencies.

DD: But every image that presents itself to you should be attended with the greatest sense of humiliation rather than encouragement. It's like this life is like a debasement. The best thing I can say is that it's frightening. These images arise, and we encourage them, we pamper and we preen them.

AD: There's even a school of psychology that says they're the only reality. It passes itself off as being spiritual.

Lisa: Would you say in order to enter the thought-free state that there would have to be some partial death of the ego, or some surrendering of the ego before that could happen?

AD: Yes.

Lisa: And then upon returning to your everyday life then, isn't it the ego is more cunning, develops more tendencies, to prevent that sort of thing happening again?

AD: Sure.

Lisa: So then what is the connection between that initial surrendering . . . and the even stronger ego . . . (Q: paraphrase)

VM: How do you win after the backlash?

AD: I don't know what you mean by connection, there's obviously connection. But I'll answer the other one by saying, "You know how."

Lisa: You know how what?

VM: To win.

Lisa: You know how to win.

AD: What do you do when you get a backlash, you have to fight twice as hard. What do you want--to lay down in bed, because you got a glimpse?

AH: This ego being associated with consciousness, we've spoken about that as it is a debasement?

AD: No. I think Dennis had something else in mind. I think he felt the divinity that consciousness really is, and that it should project itself as an ego, one could experience momentarily a feeling of the way that higher consciousness has been debased.

AH: If there is any kind of distortion or debasement, would it be appropriate to think of that as always on the objective side, that consciousness from the divine would always have to remain as subjective. Is that appropriate?

AD: I don't understand.

AH: The quote that Randy read spoke of this distortion or diminution of this consciousness when it is associated with an ego. But it would seem that the consequence of that is that any objective referent is a distortion, and that consciousness would rather remain on the subjective side. The thought-free state is the absence of an object, but not the absence of the subject.

AD: Not the absence of the...?

AH: Of the subject, or the absence of the consciousness. It's simply the absence of any objective referent.

AD: There's an absence of any thought, yes...

AH: The question is, the absence of the thought is only the absence of objective, it's not the absence of subjective, is that an appropriate way to speak?

AD: Yes. (Q:= quiet sound of approval) Do you want to read some more? (Q: aside) He's referring to the Overself consciousness as subjective, free of all objective referents.

RC: You wouldn't say there's any thought of the subjective.

AD: No, there wouldn't be a thought of the subject, that wouldn't be the subject. That's why I kept changing the word 'subject' to 'consciousness'.

(Q: RG reads)

EGO AS PSYCHOSOMATIC ORGANISM PLUS TRACES OF MEMORY

PB: "The persona, the mask which he presents to the world, is only one part of his ego. The conscious nature, composed of thoughts and feelings, is the second part. The hidden store of tendencies, impulses, memories, and ideas--formerly expressed and then reburied, or brought over from earlier lives, and all latent--is the third part." (Persp. p. 102 & 8.3.17) (para reread)

RG: So there are three levels of the ego and I think part of the problem is that in different quotes PB is referring to one, two or all three of them.

(Q: Student conversation for about 15 mins. with rehashing of former discussion about who or what incarnates. No AD comment.) (quote is reread)

PB: "The persona, the mask he presents to the world . . ."

AD: The psychosomatic organism plus the traces of memory is a way of understanding the ego. Don't make a mountain out of the obvious. The psychosomatic organism plus the traces of memory is the ego. That's all.

IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF EGO

PB: "In spite of itself the ego is drawn more and more to the spiritual grandeur revealed by these glimpses. Its ties to selfishness, animality, and materiality are loosened. Finally it comes to see that it is standing in its own way and light and then lets itself be effaced." (Persp. p. 309 & 22.8.55)

PB: "The ego is always in hiding and often in disguise. It is a cunning creature, never showing its own face, so that even the man who wants to destroy its rule is easily tricked into attacking everything else but the ego! Therefore, the first (as well as the final) essential piece of knowledge needed to track it down to its secret lair is how to recognize and identify it." (8.4.391)

AD: Listen to that. (Q: quote is reread)

Lisa: That's a big question--how?

AD: You've first got to know what it is, and what you're looking for. I was pointing out to Andrew that's why this knowledge is so important, once you're seriously on the quest. Once you're seriously on the quest that's going to be your preoccupation. Long or short path or combination, it doesn't matter. You've got to know what it is you're dealing with. So that this knowledge is absolutely vital. Anybody who talks about the non-existence of the ego, or glorifies it, or says it's illusory, all that is besides the point. It's just a lot of hokum.

Lisa: Does that mean that so long as you are sincerely working to find that answer to that "how," through grace the answers will come?

AD: I don't follow you. Notice I'm making demands on your articulation?

Lisa: Yes, I'm sure it's pretty bad.

AD: Go ahead. Try again. Try.

Lisa: (asks for reread of part of quote.) So how to recognize that secret lair that keeps getting more and more secret as you progress? . . . What's the right way to act, the least egotistical. Sometimes it is a big problem. I find myself in a situation and I can't distinguish what is the less egoistic way. So you sit down, read these quotes, meditate . . . and perhaps get answers?

AD: Yes, meditation will be one of the most direct ways of getting acquainted with it because it helps you burrow down into its roots.

Lisa: You kind of drop the problem, and listen in, try to get an intuition? (Someone gives Lisa a quote to read):

PB: "The aspirant will receive personal knowledge from within, as apart from mere teaching from without, only to the extent that he has inwardly prepared himself to receive it. The fruits of the quest cannot be separated from the disciplines of the quest. He is considered capable of grasping philosophic

truth when, either now or in a previous existence, he has to some degree purified his understanding by self-discipline, introverted it by meditation, and tranquilized it by reflection. When his mind has habituated itself to this kind of keen, abstract thinking and in some measure has developed the capacity to rest absorbed in its own tranquil centre, when the emotions have purified themselves of personal and animal taints, he has prepared himself for the highest kind of knowledge. For then he is able to use this highly concentrated, well purified, efficiently serene consciousness as an instrument with which to engage himself in a quest to understand in true perspective what the ego really is and to look deep into the nature of the mind itself. For then his self-examination will be free from the emotional distortions, the materialistic impediments of the unpurified, unstilled, and unconcentrated consciousness. The truth about his own existence and the world's existence can then be seen as never before.” (2.9.1)

AD: Otherwise the Sphinx will swallow you up. Thank you.

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