

CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
October 13, 1982
PB PARAS; EGO

TOPIC: PB Paras

SUBJECT: Ego

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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 Some Paul Brunton Notebook paras are, as of 2018, unpublished, and are noted as such.
- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: IV.3.30, IV.8.1, V.7

NOTES:

- Anecdotes about PB told by Randy highlighted in yellow.
- Earlier transcript versions exist.

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1982 10/13 at Wisdom's Goldenrod

PB Paras; Ego

Readable Edited Transcript

PB PARAS ON EGO

[Audio File 1982 1013a Begins]

(Q: Many quotes read at the beginning of class.)

RC: Be similar to what we did the last couple of classes. This is the Orange volume 11. Anthony has gone through it and marked out passages that he thought were worth reading.

PB: "Every attempt to disassociate . . ." (8.4.205)

PB: "The ego automatically assumes the posture . . ." (8.3.119)

PB: "When the ego is brought to its knees in the dust, humiliated in its own eyes, however esteemed or feared, envied or respected in other men's eyes, the way is opened for Grace's influx. Be assured that this complete humbling of the inner man will happen again and again until he is purified of all pride." (Persp. p. 98 and 8.4.430)

PB: "Out of this ego-crushing, pride-humbling experience he may rise, chastened, heedful, and obeisant to the higher will." (8.4.431)

PB: "That crafty old fox, the ego . . ." (Persp. p. 100 and 8.4.319)

PB: "The presence and activity of the Overself . . ." (unpublished, 11g/7/59)

PB: "'Blessed are the poor in spirit, said Jesus' . . ." (8.4.196)

PB: "With this release from ego . . ." (8.4.473)

PB: "It was a wise teacher . . ." (8.4.197)

PB: "Whoever wants the 'I' . . ." (8.2.17)

PB: "The ego seems to have a colossal . . ." (8.3.62)

PB: "Each human being has a specific . . ." (1.5.19) (reread)

PB: "The ego's capacity for its own . . ." (unpublished, 11g/11/9)

PB: "With one part of himself . . ." (8.4.106, typed out & discussed later)

PB: "The ego may carefully suppress . . ." (8.3.125)

PB: "Until it is brought to his attention . . ." (8.4.153) (reread)

PB: "The ego's lower nature . . ." (8.3.121)

PB: "It is ludicrous . . ." (8.1.103)

PB: "Egotism may take . . ." (8.3.152)

PB: "The ego lays its crafty plans . . ." (8.3.48)

PB: "Charity, service . . ." (8.4.385)

PB: "How the little ego wants to be admired . . ." (8.3.140)

PB: "The ego stands in the way . . ." (8.4.369)

PB: "In the absence of this rooting-out . . ." (8.4.9) (reread)

PB: "When it is declared . . ." (8.2.32) (reread later)

PB: "Most people are prisoners . . ." (8.4.79)

PB: "Where the crushing . . ." (8.4.213)

PB: "Such are the demands of the personal self . . ." (8.4.388)

PB: "The ego arises by a trick . . ." (unpublished, 11g/19/32) (reread)

PB: "It is not to be expected that anyone . . ." (8.4.366)

(Q: long student discussion)

WHEN EGO IS CRUSHED, GRACE MAY ENTER

DB: I had a question on the second quote which concerns itself with this humbling of the inner man. After which this experience has occurred a number of times, there arises the possibility of opening to grace. That being the case, it seems that this experience is to be sought out after a fashion . . . (Q: paraphrase of this = Is there some way to bring this experience on since it is so beneficial?)

AD: Will you read the first part (Q: to D & A)?

PB: "When the ego is brought to its knees in the dust, humiliated in its own eyes . . ."

DB: . . . After a period of time, this experience comes upon one a number of times . . .

AD: Stop, stop. You're going to go out and seek that? Who are you, Saint Francis?! We're speaking about an ego-crushing experience! You're not going to come out better for it, you're going to come out a little humble. That's called eating crow. If you didn't eat crow then it's not, you know, the ego crushing experience he's talking about. Once that happens there is something made available. You are opened up a little bit but usually it takes probably the whole cosmos to do it.

DB: On the one hand it doesn't seem like it's anything you could bring about, to sit down and say, well today I'm going to crush my ego, have an ego-crushing experience.

AD: Yes, the ego's saying I'm going to crush myself, right?

DB: No, it won't do that.

AD: And on the other hand?

DB: On the other hand, everything that the ego can possibly do . . . ends up from the point of view of the quest to be self-defeating because it's just giving itself another form of identity . . . He defines this experience to be the prelude to Grace and I would understand having this experience as an expression of Grace in the first place . . .

AD: I said, if you're like Saint Francis or Blessed Henry Suso who wore a hair jacket with nails sticking into his flesh for twenty years, then you can say that. But for most of us it has to really be delivered. We're put through it. It's an ego crushing experience he's talking about. He's not talking about what you and I think we can do. It's true what you say, it can be conceived of as some sort of Grace but I think what he's trying to make clear here is that only when the ego has been humbled and its arrogance brought to toe that the possibility of Grace may come in. But as long as the ego has that persistent arrogance and a whole network of defense mechanisms to block out anything from coming in, it's not going to get that Grace, so the world has to come and crush it so that a little grace might come in. But no one willingly goes out to seek it, take my word for it.

DB: We'll all twist and turn and do whatever we have to to avoid it.

AD: There are some heroic souls. I wasn't exaggerating. Whether Saint Francis or Henry Suso or any of those men, but they're rare, they're the rare, they're the heroic souls. For most of us, it's got to happen to us.

EGO WANTS TO KNOW TRUTH; EGO AS AN EVOLVING MATRIX OF TENDENCIES

Laurie D: Can we discuss the quote where he says with one part of himself he tries to seek truth while with another part he tries to evade it? . . .

PB: "With one part of himself he honestly seeks truth, but with another part he tries to evade it." (8.4.106) (Q: para read at the beginning of class, not here.)

Laurie D: Is it saying that the one part of him that honestly seeks truth is not coming from the ego? It has to come through the ego, it has to be manifested through this field---if you want to call that the ego, but its source is not the ego. Is that correct, to think that way?

AD: No, he's saying that it's coming from the ego. There's a part of you that wants the truth, there's a part of you that wants the truth, there are other parts that don't. We spoke about that as generating a continuum within the ego of a certain stream of thought. And if you persist, so to speak, it becomes the residue or part of your personality, this insistence to want to find the truth. It will be, you know, with and among other tendencies but it's part of the ego. It's the ego that wants to know the truth.

RC: We had that one passage:

PB: "Being what it is, a compound of higher and lower attributes which are perpetually in conflict, the ego has no assured future other than that of total collapse. The Bible sentence, "A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand," is very applicable to it: this is why the aspirant must take heart that one day his goal will be reached, even if there were no law of evolution to confirm it--as there is." (8.4.397)

AD: Yes. It's a kind of internal neurosis always in the ego. There's a kind of internal sclerosis in the ego all the time. We're never quite integrated. There are always different parts. This part of the ego wants this and another part of the ego wants that. If we think of the ego as tendencies, you know, a matrix of tendencies, then . . . (Q: unclear) there could be tendencies that want the truth and there could be tendencies that want a new pair of wings. There could be tendencies that want money, that want material things. And it's a hotbed of all these tendencies. And you have to decide which ones to reinforce and continuously reinforce. You might as well. You're going to pay for it, either way.

Laurie D: I see what you're saying. It just seems that with all we've said about the ego, it's hard to believe . . .

AD: . . . that it would have good tendencies?

Laurie D: Well, that it could want to annihilate itself . . . because that's essentially what you're saying.

AD: No. He says with a part of it, it wants the truth. If you take a person who's in extreme pain, a part of him wants to annihilate the rest. If a person is seeking truth and he recognizes that the ego is going to have to be subdued, that's feasible. You have to remember that he's going to try to give you a general picture of the ego. It's not completely and all negative. There's some good to it. You remember, he'll bring up a point where he speaks about the ego as achieving impeccable manners and ultimately refined. It's the ego that does that.

(Q: some hard to hear discussion)

AH: There's one quote where he spoke about the ego being fundamentally or at base an incorrect thought. . . .

AD: You'd better read that again.

RC: He said, when we speak about it being an unreal entity, a fictitious entity.

AD: You mentioned this before, that inherent in the thought process which we refer to as the ego the capacity for it to get tricked into believing in itself as a permanent entity can arise.

(Q: more discussion)

PB: "When it is declared that the ego is a fictitious entity, what is meant is that it does not exist as a real entity. Nevertheless, it does exist as a thought." (8.2.32)

(Q: this quote sets stage for whole discussion)

AH: So from that perspective, if the ego is at base this thought, how can part of the ego disassociate itself from another part of itself.

AD: You're doing the same thing he tells you not to do. He tells you the ego is not a permanent entity. So now you say it's a thought and you make that a permanent entity.

(Q: AH and RG: lengthy discussion)

MEDITATION USES ONE THOUGHT TO SUBDUE ALL OTHER THOUGHTS; EGO IS NOT A THING

AH: From the point of view of practice, from the point of view of meditation, from the point of view of my trying to live a better life, how shall we jump over our own shoulders?

AD: Andrew, don't you do that when you meditate? You use one thought to try to put down the other thoughts. So you say a japa, you say a mantram, *Om Bitsu*, that's a thought. And the purpose of that thought is to stop and block all the other thoughts, to reduce all the multiplicity of thoughts to one thought. So that if you keep saying *Om Bitsu* intensely enough and [Q: with] enough perseverance that thought becomes dominant. All the other thoughts subside in comparison to that. Now you have only one thought to work with whereas before you had millions.

AH: Anthony, if you're successful in that exercise and reduce it to one thought is that one thought still the root of the ego?

AD: Let me ask you, Andrew. Someone praises me or criticizes me. Let's say they criticize me, and at that moment I feel hurt. That feeling of being hurt, that's the ego. You want to grab it with your fingers, go ahead. But the next instant, the same person will say what a nice guy you are. Now you feel good. There's the ego again. Are you going to grab that with your two hands and embrace it? You keep trying to make a thing out of this. In both cases, it just slipped by. It's necessary to understand its elusive nature.

You remember this man who came over to the teacher and told him he was egoless and he started pouring the tea, you remember? He filled up the cup and then it started overflowing and he was getting mad. It was the ego. And the teacher did that very deliberately. "Oh, you have no ego?" And he kept pouring the tea out. (Q: laughter) But if you try to grasp it, where is it? So that could exist among all thoughts, alright, this conflict ever present in all of them or in any number of them, and the conflict could always go on among the thoughts. (Q: this sentence needs editing for readability.) But don't look for SOME THING. You won't find it. Try to remember the basic thing though is that in meditation you do this all the time. You use one thought to subdue all the other thoughts.

AH: The example of meditation can be understood . . . But how can we subjugate thought or ego when we're not meditating?

AD: You can try to take a Witness position.

(Q: student conversation)

RC: In one of the PB notes in one of the other books, he comments on Brother Lawrence because a lot of people like to refer to Brother Lawrence being "The time of work and the time of meditation are the same together. He was always in the blessed presence." Most people kind of overlook the fact that he spent twenty years in very difficult discipline reaching the point where he could say that. [Note: See PB, *Notebooks*, 23.4.39.]

AD: This is the secret doctrine, Andrew. The others are quite esoteric.

(Q: student discussion about the following quote)

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1982 1013a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

UNIQUENESS OF EACH EGO

PB: "Each human being has a specific work to do--to express the uniqueness that is himself. It can be delegated to no one else. (Q: previous sentence not read on tape) In doing it, if he uses the opportunity aright, he may be led to the great Uniqueness which is super-personal, beyond his ego and behind all egos." (1.5.19)

AD: There's a very positive statement about your ego.

DD: Is that suggesting there's a perfect uniqueness or a way of participating in being?

AD: No. If you refer to the chart, that's your very particular uniqueness. It's yours and no one else's; there are no two that are alike. There's no possibility of numerical identity here. And he goes on further--and this is the ego he is speaking about--each and every person is a very special and unique interpretation or manifestation of his own higher self. So there are no two egos that are alike. Alright, number one. Number two, Then he points out that there's a special work delegated to that and the Hindus would call that your dharma, whatever it is. Whether it's to be a warrior or an insurance salesman or whatever. That's your particular dharma. And if you do that faithfully and correctly, it could lead you to the reality which is behind your ego as well as to the reality which is behind every ego. Would you read that again now?

PB: (repeat) "Each human being has a specific work to do--to express the uniqueness that is himself. It can be delegated to no one else. In doing it, if he uses the opportunity aright, he may be led to the great Uniqueness which is super-personal, beyond his ego and behind all egos." (1.5.19)

AH: How do we know if we're pursuing our dharma?

AD: That's your problem, Andrew.

AH: That's not in the quote, is it?

AD: No.

AH: If we could be sure of that, then we could relax.

AD: And you'd fall right out again! (Q: laughter) Again, you have to see things like that, let's say in a person's chart. Uniqueness here doesn't refer to the fact that you have to be a certain kind of tradesman or merchantman. It refers to something that has to be worked out in you. Whatever it is that has to be worked out, and we try to understand that in terms of the chart, the particular ideas that you're working out--that's your special uniqueness. You must express it and that means working in the world, and doing whatever it is you have to do. And generally, you'll have to do it.

AH: Is it possible not to express them?

AD: Yes, it's possible. A person can deviate, yes.

AH: There's some psychological deformity?

AD: It could. It could be that. It could be circumstance. It could be many reasons. But generally the tendency is for us to follow through what our uniqueness is because there's a compelling reason that's operating, and through which we feel that this is the way we best are.

Laurie D: So the way one lives his life, regardless of what he thinks about it, or the opinions that he has about what he is, the way he actually is living it . . .

AD: Yes, that's usually your destiny.

Laurie D: That's what you're calling that uniqueness, and in that living of it that's reflected.

AD: The living out of the ideas that you embody, the special uniqueness that you are. We could leave out the reactions to it.

Laurie D: But the reactions, the thoughts about it . . .

AD: That's the way you spoil it.

IS OVERSELF ONE OR MANY?

Laurie D: But isn't he also saying in that quote there's an expression of another type of uniqueness even beyond this, or another type of reality, that all these individuals are trying to express. That there's something else . . .

AD: . . . which we all have in common and he calls the great uniqueness. What would that be?

Laurie D: I think I'd have to trace that to the Overself, somehow.

AD: The Soul in the Nous.

(Q: student conversation.)

RC: I could express something that PB said to me, which we ended up batting around several times . . . since we're doing his notes it's probably an appropriate perspective to have on the floor. I asked him about--there seemed to be a very definite difference in point of view, between him and Plotinus in terms of whether the Overself was single or plural. And his first answer was yes! And the next time I pushed him in terms of--isn't there a particular intelligibility in the Intelligible World that would be the intelligibility of Buddha that would be different than the intelligibility of Christ--different than the intelligibility of Pythagoras--his response to that was: Putting names on that intelligibility is for children who are just beginning to learn about these things. He really stuck very hard to wanting to speak of the Overself as singular and not as plural.

(Q: more comments)

RC: It began to dawn on me that he really did use the Overself in a sliding scale. I suspect that he would use Overself to go as high as the individual's own experience of the One. And he said, yes. And we talked about how this is not to be understood as a graded hierarchy of Mind, World-Mind, and Overself. To try to put it into that kind of hierarchy was to misunderstand. And the last time that we talked about it he brought it up. He said: To what extent do you think that Plotinus would enforce a strict hierarchy between One, Intellectual-Principle, and Soul. And I told him I thought it was the same problem we talked about

before with his language, in terms of Mind, World-Mind, and Overself, but that Plotinus had made the point very clearly, that if one had the experience of the One, he necessarily experiences the whole of the One. That the One by its very nature is something that cannot be conceived as something you could experience a part of. That contact you have, if you could call it that, with the One is implicitly complete. But that the knowledge that an individual would have, the understanding he would bring to bear upon that, would differ according to the capacity of the individual's development. And you could say that that knowledge and understanding was that individual's slice of the World-Mind. So you could say that each individual had perfect access to the One but not complete access to the World-Mind, and he said "Yes, that's the way I would express it."

(Q: more discussion)

RC: . . . much of the discussion of plurality in the Intelligible World is the ego maintaining itself in our conceptuality.

(Q: more discussion)

RC: He said that to try to put names on this intelligibility is to cling to the form side and that's for children . . .

LDeS: Would you say from your understanding of Plotinus and from what PB said that there is still a difference?

RC: . . . He mentioned that someone thought that Christ was the avatar for the coming age. The individual was non-sectarian and had a certain amount of illumination but because he thought Christ was the avatar for the coming age he declared himself Christian--not because he was sectarian. So there we were able to drive it home to say what does it mean to say that a certain individual is the avatar for a certain historical period and there's a difference for both the historical period, and the avatar. So then he just said that, I see what you mean.

AD: The point I think he's trying to make there though is really quite simple, and you stated it, the similarities of soul are so great in contrast to the dissimilarities between one ego and another. And you were correct, when you speak about one soul as different from another you're bringing in conceptual categories that belong to the lower realm and you're applying them to the higher. The only reason we do that here is to maintain a certain amount of fluidity of expression until the time is ripe to see that soul is so great in their likeness that they can hardly be distinguished from one another.

RC: It's significant that in the famous passage where Plotinus talks about "Many times it has happened, that I went out of the body into my self." When he comes back, he says "I ask myself how could it happen that Soul, capital S, has thus come into my body." He doesn't say that MY soul has come into this body, but that Soul has come into my body. [Note: See Plotinus, IV.8.1, first para.]

AD: Yes, it's also a tremendous statement he makes that in the experience of the One, the Soul is hyper-noetic and IS AS IT IS IN THE ONE. He speaks about the Soul as hyper-noetic, that is, if you go beyond the Nous itself, and in the experience of the Supreme Identity, that experience is of the Soul as IT IS, in synesthesia with the One. That's an exact quote. So it's really the danger, from PB's point of view, the

danger is that you will import to the Intelligible realm conceptual distinctions, which although they're applicable here, are really quite meaningless there. There are no words over there.

RC: There's one time that he said--we were talking about this--he said the distinction from an intellectual point of view is a valid one and can be maintained but nonetheless, from the point of view of the people who are living there and the necessary thing about their being able to live there is that they wouldn't make that distinction.

(Q: student discussion)

RG: When you say it's an intellectual distinction or a conceptual distinction, not speaking meta-ontically but ontically, doesn't that distinction have a certain ontic reality, which is beyond the conceptual formulation of it, or not?

AD: I'd have to answer the question yes and no.

RG: But in the tractate in Plotinus where he asks, "Is there an Ideal Archetype of Particular Beings?", in that tractate he seems to take the yes part, in the Intelligible . . . [Note: See Plotinus, V.7.]

AD: Yes, it's just that in the experience itself these things are all obliterated. It's inconceivable but if we were to think of souls as presences and one presence includes all other presences, and can't be distinguished from them, it would be very hard there to maintain what we're speaking about here conceptually when we speak about THERE.

RG: Then why did Plotinus speak of it that way? What was the intent of that kind of understanding?

AD: I think that was to maintain coherence and consistency in his whole doctrine. When the person would see the whole doctrine and have some experience of it, those things would get clarified. Any other passages we want to discuss or shall we read a few more?

LITTLE UNIQUENESS AS EGO/NATAL CHART, GREAT UNIQUENESS AS INTELLIGIBLE WORLD WITHIN YOU

LG: . . . Matrix of possibilities . . . We can speak of the chart of a certain REIFICATION of one possibility, a certain pattern . . . (Q: Hard to hear. Paraphrase = The chart provides a selection of the total possibilities available to a person.) Is there a growth to a point where there is a freedom from that and those particular reason-principles, a freedom from the ego? Could you speak about an ability to use ALL the possibilities, all the 360 degrees . . . (would be available to a sage). (Q: last sentence unclear)

AD: Yes, the sage is much more sensitive to ALL the ideas than an individual who is compelled and organized by a structure of particular ideas.

LG: . . . I'm trying to see the possibility of uniqueness. All those 360 degrees constitute everyone's chart although there is a specification for each person.

AD: They constitute everyone's chart? You mean they're the content? But each one sees them quite differently from everyone else. Because everyone is very particularized.

LG: Well, they're identified with that ego structure.

AD: They're not IDENTIFIED with that ego structure. They ARE that ego. They are that structure. So it is through that structure that you see all the ideas, which means your version of all the ideas will be different from someone else's version of all the ideas.

LG: But there is an individual prior to the particularization of that ego structure. The individual is not always ego.

AD: The individual IS the ego. That's what you're talking about.

RG: And that individual is prior to those 360 degrees. Therefore that 360 degrees can't be the uniqueness because uniqueness is prior.

AD: The uniqueness refers to the aspectual relationships of the Chaldean planets and all the parts and everything else, that you were to say this particular individual and no one else.

RG: That's the little uniqueness. There are two uniquenesses.

AD: Yes, that's the little uniqueness. The great uniqueness is the Intelligible World in each and every soul.

LD: And that is the 360 degrees?

AD: That's the Nous. Alright, let's read a few more. (Q: pause) You understand that THIS IS THE PROBLEM. You know that, don't you? Unless you understand this you're going NOWHERE! You can go to all the pilgrimages you want, you can see all the sages you want, you can do ANYTHING you want. Unless you deal with this here you're not getting and going anywhere. That's why I call it the secret doctrine. You think I'm kidding.

LD: Take a lot of great artists, they express something very unique. Their life was a work of art in a lot of ways. Take the people whose charts we have done. There is a uniqueness. They seem to be brought to a degree of realization somehow without exactly saying, now I'm going on the quest.

NH: But there isn't necessarily a total balance there.

RC: It's quite often that you do see these most of these men or women referring to (Q: unclear) . . . feeling a certain fundamental alienation from the collective, a certain isolation, a necessity to turn inward, even if they don't use the words that way.

(Q: student comments)

AD: The special uniqueness that an individual is (Q: lives), the closer it conforms to the World-Idea, the closer it conforms to the great uniqueness. Your ego is part of that World-Idea.

JG: I don't understand what you mean when you speak of the uniqueness in terms of the chart. Do you have a choice whether to conform or not?

AD: We're just using the chart as an example, a mathematical example, that there can't be two alike. That means that you are very very special, and so am I.

JG: But you wouldn't use the chart example for what you were saying about conforming to the World-Idea?

AD: The ego is part of the World-Idea. It's conforming more or less to the World-Idea. And as it evolves it will conform more and not less to the World-Idea. Eventually you'll be pushed right into the World-Idea and be like part and parcel of the World-Idea. Then you are the Great Uniqueness. When you stop seeing yourself as a personality, distinct and separate from everyone else, but you can see that also within the realm of the whole of the impersonal then you are at the level of the Great Uniqueness. It's really quite straightforward.

EGO WORSHIPS ITSELF; EGO IS NOT A THING; EGO AS DRAGON; MOST CRUCIAL PART OF THE TEACHING

AH: . . . When you describe the ego as part of the World-Idea there's a way of describing the whole scenario and there shouldn't be any problem whatsoever. But there's an enormous problem that we each experience on a personal level, the problem of wanting to understand and all that. What is it that's specifically wrong? We talk about attachment to the ego. What's attached to it?

AD: It's attached to itself.

Laurie D: Didn't we say that the ego assumes it's the higher self. Wasn't that a fundamental error, one of the fundamental errors, assuming it's the reality or the highest reality?

AH: The thing that Anthony just said, it's attached to itself.

JG: It likes itself.

AD: No, you're wrong. It doesn't like itself, it LOVES itself, it worships itself, it adores itself. What's wrong? Well, with that kind of attitude you're never going to have a cosmic or an impersonal point of view. Obviously.

AH: With what kind of attitude?

AD: With the attitude of self-adoration. It would be very difficult to have an impersonal point of view.

AH: . . . I'm asking, what is the specific problem . . .

AD: Andrew, you keep going back to that point, and it's a point that you're going to have to see for yourself. Each and every one of us is going to have to see this for himself, what the ego is. Of course, if he keeps looking for SOME THING I don't think he's going to find it. But, if you took the example I just gave when I spoke about someone praises you and you feel good, that feeling good, you can SMELL its presence right there. Because in the next instance someone is going to criticize you and you're gonna feel bad and you're gonna ask yourself, why do I feel bad. Well, who is it that feels bad? And every time these feelings come around, you'll get to know them little by little. You know, you meet a nice pretty girl, and you take her to the cafeteria and have coffee and you're feeling good. Who's that feeling good? You know. You'll get to know him.

AH: But you know, the way we've described . . .

AD: No, that's trouble. No, that's exactly the trouble. I mean, if you do it right then and there, when the feeling bad or feeling good--if you look at it right THEN AND THERE instead of being preoccupied with feeling good or feeling bad, you might be able to see how elusive it is.

AH: When you say he who feels good bad or indifferent, it doesn't have any foundation in anything except himself. Like the way we described . . .

AD: That's the whole point. The foundation isn't in himself, in his ego. I feel good! I just had this nice warm cup of coffee. Who's that creature, crawling around, sliding, insinuating itself, every remark, every thought, every glance, every memory? Who is it? Are you asking me "Show it to me?" I can't, go look for yourself. Maybe a mirror might help.

AH: You say that it has its basis in some higher ontological principle and it's really associated with . . .

AD: No, that's not the point of the discussion now. If you don't keep the microscope zeroed in on what we're discussing, he's going to make his getaway. You just try to know that someone says something to you, you get angry and ask yourself: who is it that got angry? See if you can come up with somebody. You'll see that you no sooner know that it was there, the next instant it isn't. Because the next thought is another thought and the vitality of that thought alright, which we sometimes call the dragon, and he's very crafty and sly. He just goes from one thought to another, makes himself at home in all of them and he has many disguises, many hiding places. That's why I call it the secret doctrine, Andrew. And it's the most crucial part of the teaching. Because the difference between being on the right-hand path and the left-hand path is to know the difference between those two.

AH: Which are--these two?

AD: The ego.

AH: And?

AD: Whether you're serving your self or the higher . . . (Q: pause)
Let's read a few more.

EGO AS UNCONSCIOUS COMPLEX

PB: "The ego is like a repression which must be dug out of the subconscious mind, seen and understood for what it is, and then let go until it vanishes, losing all its secret power thereby." (8.3.2)

AD: Once more.

(Q: para repeated)

AD: We'd better stop and discuss this.

(Q: student discussion)

RG: The whole matrix of possibilities in the subconscious mind has to be unearthed and in that you depotentialize it.

AH: The ego can be described by analogy with a psychological complex. But it may also be possible that it is the fundamental complex. It's the complex that all the others need in order to be complexes.

AD: Yes, I wouldn't buy that, Andrew. If you recognize that it is the fundamental complex and you start working at it--he says dig it out--and then it loses some of its power. We know from psychology that a complex of which you are unconscious has tremendous power over you and repeats itself incessantly given any occasion or opportunity. But we also know that once that thing is brought up to consciousness, and the person, so to speak, really explores it and sees it for what it is and tries to understand it consciously it loses a certain vigor, a certain power, and in the same way what we're trying to understand is the nature of this ego so it doesn't have a stranglehold on us, the way it does unconsciously. And as long as you're unconscious that you have an ego and the ramifications of that notion, you're always going to be willy-nilly subjected to it. I'm not saying you'll be free of it but to become aware of it is at least a beginning. You know one can at least pause between an act and a reaction to an act.

RG: Is it in this sense that you mean that the Sun is the ego-complex?

AD: Yes.

DB: Sometimes, the tendency is to think that the ego is imposed on us from without. The implication of this quote might be rather that the ego is something we're actually doing.

JG: I don't understand.

AH: Is it being done to us or are we doing it to ourselves?

RG: Depends who you take to be the us.

AD: We said it's all these things. It's tendencies, it's dreams, it's emotions, it's thoughts. Everything that comes under the heading of thought, anything that you could think of could come under the heading of thought. Why restrict it to just doing?

(Q: more student discussion)

AD: OK, let's read a few more.

[Audio File 1982 1013a Ends]

[Audio File 1982 1013b Begins]

MORE PB PARAS ON EGO; EGO IS PART OF THE EVOLVING WORLD-IDEA; PB NOTES PROVIDE A 360-DEGREE VIEW OF THE EGO

PB: "The ego's sphere of activity is fivefold--thought, imagination, memory, feeling, and action." (8.3.5)

PB: "If, on the one side, philosophy bids him follow the line of Nature in building up the ego and developing all these four elements of his personality--will, thought, feeling, and intuition--on the other side it paradoxically bids him to negate all personality. If the ego is to be accepted because it cannot be destroyed, it is still to be mastered and its hold destroyed." (8.1.164) (reread)

(Q: discussion)

PB: "I am dubious whether anyone can be perfectly sincere if his actions do not come from this deeper source. He may believe that he is, and others may believe the same of him, but since his actions must come from his ego, which is itself spawned by deception and maintained by illusion, how can they achieve a standard which depends on complete truth and utter reality?" (Persp. p. 99 and 8.4.103) (reread)

(Q: more quotes below, first lines.)

PB: "In the highest degree the ego . . ." (unpublished, 11g/21/50)

PB: "The ego uses the most specious . . ." (8.3.131)

PB: "All experiences play their part . . ." (8.1.161)

PB: "The ego constantly invents . . ." (Persp. p. 100 and 8.4.317)

Laurie D: So is he saying there that any actions which are coming from the ego are to be mistrusted?

AD: It's very prudential to do things like that. It's prudence to think like that.

HS: Don't trust anyone under or over thirty. (Q: laughter.)

RG: It seems to be saying all actions . . . "since his actions must come from his ego . . ."

AD: It's always wise to be suspicious of the motives, always, always, no exceptions.

LD: Even the apparent yearnings for a higher life?

AD: Look, we're not saying that the ego doesn't have good impulses. What he's speaking about here is the motivation that lies behind anything we do. And it is prudent to be suspicious. Now I'm not saying you shouldn't do it, I'm just saying it's wise to check out the motivation. Don't take for granted that we're 99 percent gold because we're not.

PB: "It is not so much a matter of destroying the ego as of balancing it with the Overself, for its need of development must be recognized. Such an act will not give it equal power but put it in its proper place, as a child's individuality needs to be balanced with its parents'." (8.1.179 (11g/23/90))

PB: "The ego simulates some of the Overself's qualities and reflects some of its consciousness. But the image which is thus created is a false one." (8.3.39 (11g/24/94))

PB: "The ego is not the true self at all but rather a derived and apparent one." (unpublished, 11g/24/99)

PB: "The ego is a part of the divine order of existence. It must emerge, grow, enslave, and finally be enslaved." (8.1.165)

HS: How do you understand that? Is it part of the divine order of existence? (Q: then student mumblings)

AD: Well, we said it was part of the World-Idea. It's part of the divine order of things. It's part of the World-Idea. It's going to have to grow, it's going to have to develop, refine, dominate the soul and then in turn be dominated by the soul.

BS: "The image being a false one," would that refer to . . .

AD: It's a bad imitation. (Q: & unintelligible)

BS: By imitation do you or PB mean, in attributing a stability to itself?

AD: Well, that would be one of the things, but in general, it's a reflection and a reflection is always a distortion and a limitation of the original. Tell me, if you get up in the morning after having a dream, would you like to continue living with your dream ego or don't you think you can get along without it. The dream ego, for instance, is a bad copy, a bad reflection, a bad imitation of you, OK? So in a sense, our ego is a pretty bad imitation of the higher. By definition it would have to be.

BS: What does it mean to say that it's part of the Divine Mind?

AD: That it's part of the Divine Idea of the World.

BS: You mean that allowance for limitation is part . . .

AD: Yes.

BS: There's an allowance for error and imitation?

AD: Yes, in other words the ego is part of the World-Idea. The World-Idea is constantly being evolved until it approaches the goal that the Idea's trying to achieve and since the ego which is an idea or part of the idea, the Universal Idea, the World-Idea, it too has to go through that improvement and evolution. So that as the world so to speak evolves, closer and closer to the paradigm that's been set for it, so do the egos within that world have to evolve.

BS: So this image is within the World-Idea. It's not that the World-Idea . . .

AD: It's what? You mean this ego is part of the World-Idea? Well, if the ego is a thought and the World-Idea is a thought, then certainly the ego as thought is part of the universal thought or the World-Idea. That's why it has to be a thought.

BS: Did you say that the World-Idea was self-evolving, or did I hear you incorrectly?

AD: No, the World-Idea is put forth by the Higher, let's say the Nous or the Soul in the Nous, and this is what is being evolved. It's a much more complete and wholesome notion of what the ego is, rather than these limited perspectives: either it doesn't exist or it's not real or it's this that or the other. Over here what he's doing is building up this tremendous wholistic view of what the ego is, what its role is, what it's like, what's supposed to happen. So after he gets finished with all the remarks he makes on the ego you come away with a kind of balanced idea of what it's all about instead of these naive notions: you know, it doesn't exist, it does exist, this that and the other thing, which are really clichés and propaganda. It's got nothing to do with the issue.

BS: It depends on the vantage point you're taking.

AD: Well, that's what you want. You want a vantage point to see what it's all about instead of being deluded. Take some Vedantists who go around for sixty years denying that they have an ego. What a joke! All the time they paid their bills, go about doing their business in the world and, accompanying that, is always this notion that the ego doesn't exist. No wonder we have so many schizophrenics.

LD: Instead of denying the I-thought he seems to be expanding it into a more wholesome philosophical view of...

AD: Well, he relates it back to its source, related to the ideas, to the World-Idea, shows you its significance in terms of both, shows you its relative value. He makes one point in the quote before, (Q: ref: 8.1.164) he says, "it cannot be destroyed," unless you commit suicide, I mean, we're not talking about that. But even then, you just come back, and you'll be in more trouble. The basic point here is that it cannot be destroyed. It would have to be enslaved or mastered sooner or later. So you know what your task is, you don't go around trying the ridiculous.

PB: "The personality is rooted in the Overself. Hence its own power and movement do reflect, albeit minutely, slightly, and distortedly, some of the Overself's own attributes." (8.1.139)

AH: But there are just as many quotes tonight that take another view. Rather than this wholistic view of the ego, they suggest that it has to be seen in some sense as unreal before the philosophic work can begin.

AD: But that's the point I'm making. It's like he's working on the notion of the ego--think of that as the center of the circle--and the circumference, alright, has the various perspectives that one may and should have about the ego. It should be a view of the 360 degrees: from all sides, beneath, below, above, from every possible perspective and angle. Instead of what we just referred to as the clichés and the propaganda and all these ridiculous things that tell you nothing about what the ego is, and what it's up to, where it's going, and what it wants to do.

AH: But if the task is to establish a perspective and in establishing that perspective we agree that the ego is both real and unreal . . .

AD: He didn't say it's real and unreal. He said what it was, it's a thought, and as a thought it exists and as an existence it must be dealt with. Then he goes ahead and says but it's not a real thing, it's not a permanent entity. Those are the exigencies of language which force us to think that it's a thing. because of the very nature of language. Both sides are covered.

AH: Both sides.

AD: Both sides of the argument, whether it is real or whether it isn't real. And he tells you what it is, it's a thought. He throws that argument out. It's real will make you think it doesn't exist. And he doesn't want you to think that. So the whole approach that he uses and the language that he uses puts you on track. He doesn't get you into what we call GROOVES of thinking.

AH: Would it be correct then to summarize, and say it does exist but it's not real.

AD: Yes.

RC: We did that last week when we distinguished the way he uses illusions from the way he uses delusions. A delusion has no basis at all but an illusion does have a basis. It simply isn't what it appears to be. And it persists even when you know it's not what it appears to be.

Louis Damiani: We talk of the Overself as an unchanging eternal principle. How do we speak of the Overself as having thoughts but not going through change . . .

AD: The Overself doesn't have thoughts.

Louis D: Then where's the thought . . .

AD: That's a whole different ball game. I mean we go into that through Plotinus. What goes on in the soul is pure intellection or contemplative vision. Thought comes from the reasoning part of the soul, taking part of that and expanding it or turning it into a projection. But the soul's vision is not thinking, the soul doesn't think. Otherwise, it would be in just as much trouble as we are in. We could use that IV.3.30, contemplative (Q: unclear).

(Q: student discussion on illusion, more PB quotes read, below)

PB: "That person is a rarity . . ." (unpublished, 11g/24/95)

PB: "Even the apparently altruistic acts . . ." (find)

PB: "How can we carry on with our daily . . ." (8.4.44)

PB: "The root of all the trouble is not man's wickedness or animality or cunning greedy mind. It is his very I-ness, for all those other evils grow out of it. It is his own ego. Here is the extraordinary and baffling self-contradiction of the human situation. It is man's individual existence which brings him suffering and yet it is this very existence which he holds as dear as life to him!" (Persp. p. 139 and 11.2.22)

AD: That's the mystery exposed, isn't it?

PB: "It is not a change of the ego's contents . . ." (8.4.168)

PB: "If he is willing to look for them, he will find the hidden workings of the ego in the most unsuspected corners, even in the very midst of his loftiest spiritual aspirations. The ego is unwilling to die and will even welcome this large attrition of its scope if that is its only way of escape from death. Since it is necessarily the active agent in these attempts at self-betterment, it will be in the best position to take care that they shall end as a seeming victory over itself but not an actual one. The latter can be achieved only by directly confronting it and, under Grace's inspiration, directly slaying it; this is quite different from confronting and slaying any of its widely varied expressions in weaknesses and faults. They are not at all the same. They are the branches but the ego is the root. Therefore when the aspirant gets tired of this never-ending Long Path battle with his lower nature, which can be conquered in one expression only to appear in a new one, gets weary of the self-deceptions in the much pleasanter imagined accomplishments of the Short Path, he will be ready to try the last and only resource. Here at long last he gets at the ego itself by completely surrendering it, instead of preoccupying himself with its numerous disguises--which may be ugly, as envy, or attractive, as virtue." (Persp. p. 96 and 8.4.167) (reread)

(Q: Long student discussion concerning role of ego in long path, short path, and the surrender beyond both, hard to hear.)

NH: I thought that was taking the standpoint "as if" there was no ego functioning, "as if" you were the Overself. (Q: paraphrase = I thought the As-If exercise was to get like there is no ego.)

PD: That's the point, it's "as if" . . . the ego is the active agent in both paths. (Q: paraphrase)

(Q: Long student discussion concerning role of ego in long path, short path, and the surrender beyond both, hard to hear.)

AD: (Q: both long path and the short path) They're both in the imagination.

(Q: more student discussion)

(Q: two more quotes read by students to demonstrate relation of ego to sage.)

RC: There's one quote that will help . . . where he's making the expression of something that's very intimate.

PB: "If you would be a vehicle between the divine and other men, then take great care that your ego does not become a barrier." (unfound, probably partial para)

PB: "For the man in that high consciousness . . ." (8.1.210)

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF SELF-SURRENDER?

AD: The problem is, what is the nature of self surrender? Before you worry about the sage's ego or anything . . . (Q: This references students' discussion.)

LR: Yes, the ego is not the active agent in that surrender . . .

AD: You can't say that until after.

LR: But what I've understood from the quotes is that it's more like the influx of Grace.

AD: What's the influx of grace?

LR: Saying that you could surrender.

AD: No, better turn around. What is the nature of this surrender?

AH: The long path provides innumerable opportunities for us to delude ourselves about what the ego is ...

AD: Let's not go over that again. Get to the point.

AH: The short path . . .

AD: Let's get to the point. What is the nature of self-surrender? We just threw those two out. When all is said and done, this is what you've got to fundamentally do.

AH: That's the point I was trying to get to, that this confrontation is beyond both paths and different than any path is the fundamental confrontation . . .

AD: No, what is it!

AH: It's death, from one point of view.

AD: It's worse than death, because when you die you're going to come right back. You're going to come back because you did not give up the ego, so you're going to come back. So it's not like death. Very few people really die, believe me.

AH: Physical death is easy compared to this death.

AD: DEATH! DEATH! Very few people really die. Why? Because you haven't given up the ego. Then what do we mean when we say surrender the ego.

Laurie D: You mean like totally annihilate it?

AD: Next week. Thank you, gentlemen.

Laurie D: Wait a minute, wait a minute.

AD: It's a good thing to think over for a week. You're not going to get it in one night.

LD: I may not even get it.

(Q: more discussion)

AD: Think about it. It's very healthy.

[Audio File 1982 1013b Ends]