

**CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
September 5, 1984
PB PARAS; EGO**

TOPIC: PB Paras

SUBJECT: Ego

SUBSUBJECTS: Unit of Life, Idea of Man, One & Manifestation

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**# MANIFESTATION AS AN OVERFLOWING OF THE ONE'S PERFECTION; HOW DO NUMBERS
ARISE OUT OF ZERO?**

EGO AS THE CRAVING FOR EXISTENCE

BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Paul Brunton, *Notebooks*. 16 vols; Vol. 1 entitled *Perspectives* [*Persp.*].
- Paul Brunton, *The Wisdom of the Overself*
- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)
- H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: V.1.6, V.2.1

NOTES:

- Earlier transcript versions exist, including Scan File 1984 0905C2-08R27.PDF.

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1984 09/05 at Wisdom's Goldenrod

PB Paras; Ego

Readable Edited Transcript

UNIT OF LIFE MANIFESTING AS (IDEA OF) MAN

[Audio File 1984 0905a Begins]

(This side is all student discussion--30 minutes.)

PB: "The ego self is the creature born out of man's own doing and thinking, slowly changing and growing. The Overself is the image of God, perfect, finished, and changeless. What he has to do, if he is to fulfil himself, is to let the one shine through the other." (8a.4 (11g/33/30) Persp. p. 101 & 8.1.7)

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1984 0905a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

(A few minutes student discussion.)

RG: Anthony, if you were going to talk about the unit of life in the context of this quote, would you talk about it as man, or the ego, or just not talk about it at all?

AD: When you say "unit of life," you're not speaking about man, you're speaking about soul. The term is anonymous. A unit of life could be any sort of life. It could be the idea of an angel. It doesn't have to be the Idea of Man. But once the unit of life marries itself, or weds itself to the Idea of Man, then that soul becomes man. Then you have to go down that road. Remember Plato's remark? Unless you've heard of the Idea of Man your soul will not become man. It must at some time have heard of it--that means the Nous.

DB: I wanted to ask about that because it seemed to me that what was meant by man here in this particular quote was, you have this unit of life that's been sent out and started as a protoplasm. . .

AD: But where's the unit of life that you're talking about here in this quote? Tell me what you are correlating or what you are referring the unit of life to in the quote.

DB: I understood it as being that principle which provided the necessary energy for the thought and activity which then gave rise to the ego, that life which animated the body.

AD: You're saying man now. In that the unit of life is man. If you read the quote would you show me the words in the quote that you think refer to the unit of life? If you're going to be making correlations between Plotinus and PB I'd like to be in on it, on the ground floor.

DB: What I understood the first part of this sentence to refer to was that this unit of life, having evolved to the point where it had become associated with the Idea of Man then had the possibility of building for itself an ego. Because the Idea of Man, without that association with a unit of life, would not be able to go out and build a particular ego; and the unit of life, without the Idea of Man, wouldn't even be dimly aware of its existence at all. So, it's not mentioned specifically in the quote but I understood the implication of using man here to bring in that unit of life. And also because it seems he's speaking of an individual responsibility in terms of fulfillment. But it's a little bit far-fetched.

AD: Well, it's a little different than the way I understand Plotinus' meaning of the unit of life. . . I just want to know what you mean.

DB: . . . (refers to the PB "What is the use"-evolution quote, Persp. pp. 368-370 & 26.4.257) . . . Is what I just said in conformity with this quote?

AD: Well, you're putting me on the spot.

DB: I'm sorry.

AD: Because it's going to be my opinion against yours and I'd rather not do that, you know?

To me, the unit of life in the Plotinian sense of the word is like a mind, an Overself. It is that which chooses to be man. It isn't man itself. A unit of life in the Plotinian sense is a very grandiose term. It is the entelechy which you might refer to as the I AM principle. At any rate, I do, and that's why I don't want to comment on the way you see it. Because we're going to have different perspectives.

AS: That unit of life would almost be what he says has to shine through the ego. . .

AD: All the way through, through the Idea of Man, the notion of operational man, and then that further operating through the tendencies and the way they're organized according to a higher virtue. Well, we spent enough time on this quote for today.

MANIFESTATION AS AN OVERFLOWING OF THE ONE'S PERFECTION; HOW DO NUMBERS ARISE OUT OF ZERO?

PB: "Manifestation implies the necessity of manifesting. But it might be objected that any sort of necessity existing in the divine equally implies its insufficiency. The answer is that the number One may become aware of itself as being one only by becoming aware of the presence of Two--itself and another. But the figure Nought is under no such compulsion. Here we have a mathematical hint towards understanding the riddle of manifestation. Mind as Void is the supreme inconceivable unmanifesting ultimate whereas the World-Mind is forever throwing forth the universe-series as a second, an "other" wherein it becomes self-aware." (27g.4 (16v/27/40) Persp. p. 376 & 27.3.60)

(quote re-read and a few minutes student discussion)

AD: I would have difficulty with that, Alan.

AB: With interpreting the One as the Nous?

AD: Yes, because I don't see that manifesting necessarily implies deficiency. As a matter of fact, one of the happy and glorious intuitions of Plotinus, in my opinion, was when he said, "That which is eternally perfect engenders eternally." (Q: cf. Plotinus V.1.6, second to last para) In other words, it's not the deficient that can manifest but the overabundant.

AB: It's complete. It's something that's complete.

AD: More than complete, overabundant, absolutely perfect! And in that quotation that I'm referring to he speaks about that which is perfect engenders. Only what that which is perfect can engender. That which is insufficient can't produce. That would be one of the difficulties I have. In other words, I'm not going to

accept the fact that, in the world that I live in, the fact that I seek for companionship, or that I seek for someone else or something else, I'm not going to take that as an example of what the Divine is. In other words, I feel a lack in myself so I seek in others that which I lack. When you say that the Divine is manifesting because of an insufficiency you're saying it needs something else. What I'm saying is that one doesn't necessarily have to take that point of view. There's another point of view and the one that was expressed by Plotinus: that that which is perfect and beautiful and complete, overabundant, gives rise to manifestation, a sheer exuberance. (Q: cf. Plotinus V.2.1, third para) That would be one way of disagreeing with that quote but not explaining it. (laughter)

AB: Does the perfect which overflows need to become aware of itself through this overflowing? To me, to say that it needs to become aware of itself through showing forth the universe implies an insufficiency which doesn't exist. . .

AD: Another difficulty I have and I would have to ask the mathematicians is: how does 1, let alone any number, arise out of zero? I haven't been shown how that happens. (pause) I don't even know that it does happen.

S (Laurie Conrad?): When they talked about the original creation in the egg-self, and then when it was pure and luminous light, . . . in order to behold itself, in order to contract. . . maybe it's contraction in how it manifests. . . (Q: reference is to *The Secret Doctrine*)

AD: Contraction or expansion, this is a question of principle. He has explained in the *Wisdom*--he speaks about the Infinite, or the Mind, breaks forth and ideation takes place. Remember that quote anybody? I think it was in the chapter on the World-Mind.

In other words, you have just the One, the Infinite, and it breaks forth into ideation and you get the World-Mind, and the World-Idea with the World-Mind. It's the same thing I'm asking now. How does 1 or how does anything arise out of zero? The confrontation here is, I'm trying to understand a principle.

Avery, do they have any theory in math how integers arise out of zero?

AS: They actually have a . . . Do you want to see it?

AD: Yes.

AS: Well, it's the work of recent set theoreticians to try to develop the integers out of the empty set.

AD: Out of the empty set?

AS: Yes. Out of the empty set. It's very strange.

AD: Do you think we'd be able to understand?

AS: . . . The empty set, the set of the empty set. . . (many talking at once)

AD: Does it make sense what I'm speaking about? How does number, any number arise out of zero, if zero is void and empty? How can anything arise out of it? Are we making any sense? Are we talking?

S1: It seems to me that he's saying two arises out of one, but you don't get anything out of zero. Zero doesn't have any need to go beyond itself. Now the way the mathematicians have done this is they

identify zero with a particular object. You already have an object of zero. This object is the empty set, the set. . . it has nothing in it, it has no members. They say that that is zero. And then you let 1 be the set whose only element is zero. 1 is the set whose only element is the empty set. And then you let 2 be the set whose only elements are zero and 1. (young new guy math grad student what was his name?)

AD: I think you're introducing it through the back door. (laughter) You know what I mean? You're taking the term 'void' and you're making an object out of it.

S1: Yup. (laughter) . . . the empty set you take as an object. . .

CdA: Is that in some way analogous to the way Plotinus talks about the Intellectual-Principle is determined by the One?

AD: In Plotinus unity is the same thing as zero. It's not a one.

CdA: If you say the Intellectual-Principle is one. . .

AD: No, he doesn't say the Intellectual-Principle is one. He says it's one and many, one-many.

CdA: But in that analogy, the void mind in some way becomes an object of vision to the Intellectual-Principle. . .

AD: I understand the need to defend PB's point here, and I'm not being critical, I'm not trying to knock him down, I'm just having difficulties with my thinking.

AS: He uses the word 'void' in a lot of places, but it's not clear when he uses the word 'void'--in this quote it sounds like it's empty, it's true, but is this 'void' the emptiness, or the fullness out of which everything comes?

CdA: Is there a difference?

AS: It's a difference in conception. In the "Birth of the Universe" he says, looked at from our point of view the universe seems to come out of nothing. But looked at from inside, there is always the eternal hidden reality which is Mind. I think Plotinus is saying this Mind is not a void in the sense of an emptiness but it's this effulgence. It looks like nothing because there is no thing that you can name in it, and yet everything comes from it. That seems a little different from calling it a zero. Because the mathematical idea of zero has the implication of nothing, and from that kind of a zero you can't get anything out of that.

AD: We criticize the Medieval theologians for insisting that the universe was created out of nothing.

Oh, yes, the world was made out of nothing: that's an article of faith in the Catholic church. The universe is made out of nothing. PB says somewhere it's made out of its own being, the Mind. (pause) But that's nothing too. That's nothing.

So, shall we drop the quote? (laughter) I'm not fit for a metaphysical discussion tonight. There are some very difficult problems. . . Read the next one.

PB: "It would, however, be a mistake to consider the World-Mind as one entity and Mind as another separate from it. It would be truer to consider World-Mind as the active function of Mind. Mind cannot be separated from its powers. The two are one. In its quiescent state it is simply Mind. In its active state it is

World-Mind. Mind in its inmost transcendent nature is the inscrutable mystery of Mysteries but when expressing itself in act and immanent in the universe, it is the World-Mind. We may find in the attributes of the manifested God--that is, the World-Mind--the only indications of the quality, existence, and character of the unmanifest Godhead that it is possible for man to comprehend. All this is a mystery which is and perhaps forever will remain an incomprehensible paradox.” (27g.4 (16v/50/45) 27.3.65 & Persp. p. 374)

(5 min. student discussion which is hard to hear.)

AD: I don’t think he’s trying to get at anything. He’s just announcing something, like Plotinus announces the first and second Hypostases. (inaudible)

(remainder of tape is inaudible)

[Audio File 1984 0905a Ends]

[Audio File 1984 0905b Begins]

PB: “The moment the questing attitude is taken, with the Overself as its sought-for goal, in that moment the ego and the Overself are put apart as two separate things and cannot be brought together again. But by letting such thoughts go, and all thoughts subside, mind may enter the Stillness and know itself again as Mind. Yet even this is useless if the understanding that the seeker is really the sought is lacking.” (23a.3 (17g/5/60) 23.1.20)

(about 25 minutes student discussion, led by Cindy)

EGO AS THE CRAVING FOR EXISTENCE

AD: Let’s go on to another one. That was a very nice discussion. I really enjoyed it. Let’s have one more.

PB: “Remove the concept of the ego from a man and you remove the solid ground from beneath his feet. A yawning abyss seems to open up under him. It gives the greatest fright of his life, accompanied by feelings of utter isolation and dreadful insecurity. He will then clamour urgently for the return of his beloved ego and return to safety once more--unless his determination to attain truth is so strong and so exigent that he can endure the ordeal, survive the test, and hold on until the Overself’s light irradiates the abyss.” (8z-cnre.4 (11v/33/32) Persp. p. 99 and 8.4.465)

(10 minutes student discussion, including:)

HE: . . . The concept of the ego, is the ego’s taking itself to be an independent entity, rather than seeing its origin in the Overself. . . .

LR: You’re reading that as the ego’s concept of itself?

HE: Or a man’s concept of what his ego is.

LR: I was wondering if what he was saying there was that the ego was a concept.

HE: I don’t know, he didn’t say remove the ego, but it could be the ego AND the concept of the ego.

LR: So you’re taking the concept of the ego separate from the ego.

HE: Because the realized man is still functioning through something.

EM: Aren't you calling the concept of the ego what was called before egoism?

RG: There seem to be two ways to read it--Linda's idea that the ego was the concept of the ego, and if the ego was nothing more than certainly the terror involved of having all your thoughts, feelings, everything, crushed and having nothing left there; that would be an abyss, and there'd be nothing, because the ego was a concept, and if all those thoughts were smashed, then you'd be in that abyss. And if you had an ego you could rely on underneath the concept of the ego it might not be such a . . .

HE: What's left as 2% for us is like taking it all away. And if you say that the body thought is part of the ego then you know that will be left. . .

RG: Or your way of saying, coming into realization of what the real ego is, is as much of an abyss as if the ego was just a concept anyway.

(student discussion)

AD: Could we try for an example, Harriet, what the concept of the ego is? Like, suppose you're walking down the street and you're a young pretty chick and I see you and I whistle and you turn around and I say, "Let's go for a cup of coffee," and you say, "Sure." We go for a cup of coffee. There's something I feel, you know, like a certain arousal. Or let's say I'm window shopping and I look at this a mohair black suit and I imagine myself dressed in it. "Oh, boy!" Or I'm walking down the street and there's this huge Cord (Q: no-longer-manufactured luxury automobile). . . you know a luxurious car, all fan-tailed, and I see myself driving down Rte. 96 and everyone looking at me (laughter), especially the questers. (laughter) I think this is the concept of the ego? I think it's hard to get to it by words, but I think we are all familiar with the feeling. You know, like I take you for coffee and this feeling that I am, I'm something, I'm someone. Can you imagine living without that? (pause) It's pretty hard. Most of us would think it's just impossible. Because what we're doing is we're saying something like this, I think: in each and every one of us there is this craving, this desire, for existence. And it manifests through whatever that thing that we're craving for is. So it could be that beautiful car, it could be that girl, it could be that object of desire. Through each and every one of those objects of desire, my craving for existence gets manifest. And it's that very craving which I think he's referring to as the ego, the concept of the ego. And if we get to that, and if you could pull that out, it's a crucifixion. It's really quite a job. So I think that way we get closer to what this concept of the ego is. Because every time we have an encounter with it we lose. As soon as you try to argue with it, it's over.

DB: Assuming that one has this experience, where this craving (AD asks DB to speak louder) has been torn out temporarily or stopped, the normal response to that experience is going to be absolute abject terror.

AD: No. It's usually detachment, renunciation. If you go through any experience of grief, for instance, let's say, if you lose a beloved, all of a sudden the world gets absolutely deglamorized and you no longer care. I'm not saying it's going to last. Tomorrow it will resume, but that feeling, you know?

DB: Yes.

AD: . . .that any kind of existence that would be offered just has lost all value.

DB: . . . I had the experience like this where everything was devalued. . . and I thought I was going to the other place. It was very frightening.

AD: You thought you were going bananas?

DB: Yes. . . How do you deal with that?

AD: You don't deal with it, you go through it. If we could do it this way or if we could try to explain it this way, because these things are difficult. All of us at some time or another have gone through something like that. Let's say a person goes through a heart attack, where he experiences momentarily a complete withdrawal. Then he comes back and he resumes life but something has happened. He has learned that he can be separated from everything completely within the matter of a moment and that remains behind as some kind of understanding. I'm not saying the understanding is as full as when he's going through the experience, but the experience will leave behind traces. And these traces are incorporated into our understanding and gradually we begin to realize that these things can happen. And so the craving to experience the desires that we projected gets diminished gradually, little by little. And the person cannot renounce the world until sufficient experience of the transitory nature of his desires is experienced and that is dropped in his understanding, that becomes his understanding. Then he can take a renunciation. Then he could say, "I'll renounce. I'll detach." But you just can't get up and say, "Well, I'll be detached." It don't work like that.

So you go through these experiences. In some matters you are forced, you have no choice, you will be put through it. And you come out and, depending on whether you understand or glimpse the meaning of the experience or not, depending upon that, you will either benefit or not. So a person goes through something like that and tries to understand what was being experienced, he will benefit. The other who resists that experience and fights back, he won't benefit. So it depends on the individual. But that's an understanding which remains permanent. It remains part of your make-up. Now at the same time that I said this, I was saying like what I was trying to tell Harriet. That is, little by little, the craving for existence which is always being manifested, constantly, by the ego is getting reduced, little by little. So it's a very difficult thing. No one willingly parts with his ego. We've been with it so long that we think we are that.

Thank you very much. It's been a very lovely class. You don't need me anymore. (Chorus of "No" from class.) If you understand this, you don't need me.

[Audio File 1984 0905b Ends]