

Excerpts from March 14, 1984 Anthony (AD) PB paras; and March 9 on Soul in Plotinus

A.

March 14, 1984 On the Individual and Overself

PB: “If the claim of complete merger is valid, if the individual self really disappears in the attainment of Divine Consciousness, of whom then was this same self aware in the experience of attainment? No--it is only the lower personal self that is transcended; the higher spiritual individuality is not.” (Perspectives p. 342)

PB: “The unit of mind is differentiated out and undergoes its long evolution through numerous changes of state, not to merge so utterly in its source again as to be virtually annihilated, but to be consciously harmonized with that source whilst yet retaining its individuality.” (Perspectives p. 342 and 25.2.204)

AD: here I think he’s simply saying that the Overself sends forth from itself its progeny, and that progeny will eventually learn to be in harmony with the Overself and work with the Overself. I don’t see any difficulty in that other quote but maybe I didn’t hear it. So, can we try for a third?

PB: “The unit of mind is differentiated out and undergoes its long evolution through numerous changes of state, not to merge so utterly in its source again . . .”

AD: In other words, there he’s saying that there would be no sense in the transcendent Overself which is beyond all relationships to project forth from itself this entity which is part of itself and have it evolve through the whole of the World Idea and then reabsorb it. He himself would object to that, right? Alright, so then?

PB: “. . . but to be consciously harmonized with that source . . .”

AD: So then this entity which is projected from the Overself has to eventually learn to work in cooperation with this higher self. And of course, that would mean ultimately with the World Mind.

PB: “. . . whilst yet retaining its individuality.”

AH: Is the “higher individuality” the Overself?

AD: Well, he does use it like that, but over here, I think by “individuality” he means the Witness-I. In other words, the Overself projects this entity, which evolves through all the kingdoms of nature, achieves a certain status in the sense that it has a certain ontological

expediency, if I could coin a phrase, and that is what, so to speak, lives in the world, or has its becoming in the world, alright, and learns to cooperate with or work in harmony with his own Overself. But in cooperating with his Overself, which is, let's say, a particle of the World Mind, he would be also cooperating with the World Idea. Sooner or later you're going to learn to cooperate with your own higher Self, which is already cooperating with the World Mind.

(AH/AD question clarification)

AD: in this quote it seems very obvious that what he's calling the emanant or the sequent or the progeny of the Overself, that's what he's calling your individuality. In other words, the Witness-I has a certain kind of individuality. That's where we can speak about historicity. But I can't see how we can speak about historicity in terms of relationship to a transcendent Being such as the Overself is.

AH: . . . Would the Witness-I be a lesser individual than the true Self?

AD: Yes.

AH: So it would be possible to understand the lower self as including the Witness-I in relation to its prior, which is the true individual?

AD: Yes. That's the way I'd understand it, because I think of the Overself as individual; I think of it both: as one, and many. And I'm not going to budge from that definition; otherwise I'm going to be involved in a lot of difficulties later on. Let's try another one.

PB: "God, the World-Mind, knows all things in an eternal present at once. No mystic has ever claimed, no mystic has ever dared to claim, such total knowledge. Most mystics have, however, claimed union with God. If this be true, then quite clearly they can have had only a fragmentary, not a full union.

Philosophy, being more precise in its statements, avers that they have really achieved union not with God, but with something Godlike--the soul." Perspectives p. 343 and 25.1.74

AD: Remember where, in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna opened his mouth, and Arjuna saw worlds upon worlds? Remember that? That was the cosmic vision of everything that was going on at that time. And Arjuna told him, "Please, close your mouth; I can't stand it!" TBut imagine the World Mind, alright, that has that knowledge CONTINUOUSLY, no beginning, no end; all of it is included within it. Now, when a mystic claims that he's achieved union with the Divine Mind, does he have that knowledge? Does he have anything near that knowledge?

He's just bringing up the fallacy of this notion that a person can be identified with the World Mind, because then you would be in possession of that infinite knowledge. And even the sage, very often, you'll ask him something and maybe five years later the truth of his answer will come out. But if you ask him enough questions, you'll see that there'll be times when he won't

answer you, and there'll be times when he'll just disregard what you're talking about. He's not omniscient--the sage. He may be a mouthpiece for the World Mind, but he doesn't have that omniscient knowledge. So when they use the word "omniscience" in a lot of these texts, take it with a grain of salt.

LD: . . . PB seems to keep pounding at the idea that there's this unbridgeable chasm between the Soul and God. If you maintain this, how can you get back to a non-dual position? . . .

AD: Well, Louis, right now my concern is not so much with the non-dual position, that ultimately and finally there's only Absolute Mind. **My concern right now is much more with driving this concept home, the concept of the Overself, the unitary character of the ultimate intellectual Being that you really are. That's right now my concern.** I could answer that, but it would take a bit of time; I'd rather not get into that right now. I'll do it in Plotinus, okay, because he starts out with the One or Absolute Mind. Everything hierarchically emanates from it. Or you could use another metaphor: everything is within it; the differentiations within pure Intelligence are still differentiations within Intelligence.

But right now, this is the important concept, because I think you'll find that in most mystical literature and most philosophic mystical literature that this is the key concept that is NOT understood, the concept of the Soul. He calls it the Oversoul, the Overself, and that concept really has to be understood. And the nature--something about the nature and content of that Overself. let's say many of the quotes here are really for advanced mystics, mystics who are having experiences and cannot distinguish and understand that they're not experiencing Absolute Mind, but they're experiencing their Soul, which is godlike.

Don't underestimate this experience of the Overself. It is godlike. It's utterly shattering. So I don't want to underestimate that, but at the same time I do want to make this distinction. And I think you'll find that if you read some of the best writers on the subject that this concept is not available... they will immediately assume that when they have this kind of experience they're identified with God.

0309 1984: ON THE UNIT OF LIFE

AD: Now, of course, I can understand the complexity here because I-- or the-- the paradox of it all because what we're saying is that on the one hand the Overself in itself is transcendent. And then on the other hand we're saying that the Overself, in order for it to become aware of itself, objective to itself, has to go through the World-Idea. And through the World-Idea, evolving and penetrating into the depths of the World-Idea, reaching the Void Mind which is the background of the World-Idea in order for it to become objective to itself. Now, this is paradoxical and maybe for you even contradictory. But that's what we're saying, yes.

RG: But that knowledge that the Sage attains to is not inherent in the Overself itself regardless of the attainment of the Sage's insight you're saying.

AD: Yes. And to me the wonder of all of this is that the cosmic circuit or the purpose of manifestation becomes much more overwhelming in importance. In other words, when they say that the purpose of manifestation is to guide and instruct the soul, and only the World-Mind could do that, nothing less than that could do it, then this manifestation is for that purpose. And manifestation becomes meaningful. And then I'm reminded of that other thing that Eckhart said, was that if God could create anything greater than soul he would have done so. Well, anyway, to use Tim's phrase, it's a fairytale.

RG: in the various traditions when they speak of sutra-atma or the alaya-vijnana, would seem to be storehouses or some kind of organization-- or karana-akasha-- some kind of organization of all these lives. I don't understand how you would speak of that in relation to an Overself.

AD: Well the way I understand it, Dickie, is that what they call the sutra-atma, alright, is the stream of life which strings together all the incarnations, it's that continuity of that life stream which is not broken ever. And it can be withdrawn but it cannot be snapped or broken off. So I think of that as the sutra-atma. In other words, all the individual lives, body A, body B, body C, it's that life streaming through all of them which is like the thread on which all those beads are strung. I think of that as the sutra-atma.

AS: But that means that if the soul is an activity principle, as we just said, or active intelligence, then just in its abiding, or in just knowing its abiding nature it *won't* know itself totally--

AD: Yes, I think what you said makes sense.

AS: It just doesn't know itself in its totality because its abiding nature is *not* the only-- if it were Nous that would be fine because Nous *is* an abiding intelligence that's self-knowing. But because of the paradoxical nature of soul that it *is* an active intelligence, just by abiding in repose by very definition it can't know its total nature because its total nature is to *be* an active intelligence. And so it *only* comes to self-knowledge through that.

RG: Uh-hm.

AD: But anyway, now if we could stop for just a few minutes. If we go back Wednesday's quote. Does it make more sense? Is it more meaningful, notice-- he says for instance--

[AD reading, PB, V16, 26:4.257 and *Perspectives*, Chapter 26: World-Idea, #49]

“The true teaching about reincarnation is not that the divine soul enters into captivity and ignorance of the flesh [again and again] but that something emanated from the soul, that is, a unit of life that eventually develops into the personal ego, does so. The Overself contains this reincarnating ego within itself but does not itself reincarnate. It is the parent; the ego is only its offspring. The long and tremendous evolution through which the unit of life passes from its primitive cellular existence...”

“The Overself never descends or climbs, never loses its own sublime consciousness. What really does this is something that emanates from it and [that] consequently holds its capacity and power in latency, something which is finited out of the Overself's infinitude and becomes first, the simple unit of life and later, the complex human ego.”

AD: And by the way I think you've begun to see that the way PB uses the term “ego” in its integral meaning is really a very difficult concept, it's not something that you're going to get out of reading Jung or Freud. [short pause] And then he goes on--

“The belief in the merger of the ego held by some [Hindu sects] or in its annihilation held by some Buddhist ones, is unphilosophical. The “I” differentiated itself out of the infinite ocean of Mind [AD: Which I assume is the Overself.] into a distinct individuality after a long development through [the] diverse kingdoms of Nature. Having thus arrived at consciousness [AD emphasizes next four words] of what it is, having travelled the spiral of growth from germ to man, [the result of] all this effort is certainly not gained only to be thrown away.”

B. March 14, 1984 tape 2, side 1 -- Union with Overself vs. Union with the One

PB “No mortal may penetrate the mystery of the ultimate mind in its own nature--which means in its static inactive being. The Godhead is not only beyond human conception but also beyond mystic perception. But Mind in its active dynamic state, that is, the World-Mind, and rather its ray in us called the Overself, is within range of human perception, communion, and even union. It is this that the mystic really finds when he believes that he has found God.” (Perspectives p. 343 and 25.1.71)

AD: That’s an easy one. (laughter) (pause)

What do you think, Dickie?

Can the Overself have a mystic perception of the One according to this remark?

RG: Not and remain human.

AD: He says “the Overself,” doesn’t he?

RG: No mortal, “no mortal.”

AD: Right after that?

PB: “No mortal may penetrate the mystery of the ultimate mind in its own nature--which means in its static inactive being. The Godhead is not only beyond human conception but also beyond mystic perception.” (Perspectives p. 343 abd 25.1.71)

AD: What does he mean, “beyond mystic perception?”

RC: He follows up by saying here, but the Overself “is within range of human perception, communion and even union.”

AD: In other words, the Overself, I can reach the Overself.

RC: And that reaching of the Overself, I think, would be characterized, I think as a kind of mystic perception.

AD: I thought what he meant there was that I can have a mystic perception of the Overself and even more, let’s say union with it. But in what way does that illuminate the problem: does it have a perception of the One?

JfL: It couldn’t have a perception because there’d be nothing to perceive or apprehend--

AD: I’m not using the word perception in the sense that it’s something you can taste, touch.

RG: PB does seem to differentiate the One in its active and its passive mode in this quote. In its passive mode, there's no possibility of directly apprehending it. But maybe in its active mode. . .

AD: As the Intellectual, yes. . .

RG: The Overself can have some experience of it.

AH: . . . Anthony, did you have a question for us?

AD: If this was so, what he says here, then when Plotinus speaks about identity or union or the supreme experience of the One itself, that would be wrong.

LR: Haven't you said that it's not the HUMAN that can have that experience?

AD: Yes, but that's not the point.

I'm speaking about the Oversoul. Can the Overself have the experience of the supreme identity with the One? That's what it comes to.

CdA: In the past, when you've referred to this, you've referred to it as a revelation, not as experience or not as any act on the side of the Soul itself.

AD: That was in regard to some of the remarks he makes about the One. We did speak about the way Plotinus would conceive about that identity or the supreme experience. We did speak about it Friday. I'm just curious.

CdA: If I understood what you were saying Friday night, . . . it was through tracing that life essence that the One of that life essence was reached, and that life essence was not different than the One itself, but it was the way that the One itself was within the Soul.

AD: Yes. So Plotinus would then disagree with that, wouldn't he?

RC: . . . If what is experienced is the "wellspring of life," then what are we saying is being added to that life that wasn't present in it prior to that being an experience? It seems that some sort of knowing has been added, that somehow that life has become self-gnostic.

AD: What has been added? Speaking about the Supreme, Plotinus' reference here is to the supreme identity with the One itself. Now either we misunderstand Plotinus, or we misunderstand PB. But there is the notion that Plotinus was speaking about union with the unity of the Soul; that was one possibility. And the other possibility is that he was speaking about unity with the One itself. Most commentators take for granted that he's speaking about the unity with the summit of the Soul, but he makes very clear references to the fact that he's speaking about the One itself--not the unity of the Soul. He makes that very clear. Well, I didn't want to get into the easy quotes.

RG: . . . After the mortal reaches the summit of the Soul what the summit of the Soul then has access to is left open. That doesn't seem to be revealed in the quote.

AD: All right, let's read it once more; it's one of the easy quotes.

PB: "No mortal may penetrate the mystery of the ultimate mind in its own nature--which means in its static inactive being." (repeat)

AD: In other words, I, the I, this I cannot know the One in itself.

PB: "The Godhead is not only beyond human conception but also beyond mystic perception. But mind in its active dynamic state, that is, the World Mind, and rather its ray in us called the Overself, is within range of human perception, communion and even union." (Perspectives p. 343 abd 25.1.71)

AD: There, what is he saying? He's saying that I could be in communion with the World Mind. A mortal could be in union with a ray of the World Mind which is the Overself.

So if we took a person, anyone--no, not anyone--someone like Gandhi for instance, would you say that he always felt the presence of the World Mind guiding him? I would think so. He's guided by it, so that (Gandhi/down here) as a mortal he felt this presence and the direction that was offered. Not only the presence, but the actual guidance of the World Mind as to how to handle certain problems, how to work them out. So over here we're at the level where we're speaking about a mortal feeling the presence of the World Mind in his daily life, and not just in the closet hours, but in his daily life he feels the presence of the World Mind; naturally, it is through his own Overself. Yeah. OK.

PB: "It is this that the mystic really finds when he believes that he has found God."

AD: How would you go with that?

RC: This ray of the World Mind, or the World Mind as operative in this individual, is what he calls "God."

AD: Yes. So then I think Dickie's right. He leaves that question unanswered and doesn't go into it. That would be interesting, wouldn't it?

RC: That is quite a question. Because speaking of it in terms of experience, rather than in terms of principle, it really makes a problem.

[AS adds here now: ...In the Unique Godhead, ever mysterious in its unmanifested self-existence, there rises and sets, like the sun's light, the manifested World-Mind, in which--in its turn--there rises and sets all this wonderful cosmos of which it is the very soul. The first is forever beyond us but the second is always accessible to us as the Overself (soul) within us. 28.2.91]

PB: “There is some kind of a distinction between his higher individuality and the Universal Infinite out of which it is rayed, whatever the Vedantins may say. And this distinction remains in his highest mystical state, which is not one of total absorption and utter destruction of this individuality but the mergence of its own will in the universal will, the closest intimacy of its own being with the universal being.” (Perspectives p. 342 and 25.2.200)

AD: There's not only precision and accuracy here, but there's beauty in what he's saying.

(para reread, and a few student comments)

AD: You see the doctrine has to be also beautiful. It can't be only good and true; it must be beautiful. But that's the Greek in me. Thank you.

0309 1984: Deepenings Of Insight

AD:, let's try just one little bit more now Avery, maybe you remember the way we formulated the way it reaches the One, since he brought it up.

AS: Yes that was a good point. Well, we spoke about attaining this self-knowledge, we spoke about the first level of insight, would be a knowledge of that soul, a self-recognition of the soul-- the soul knows itself the way that the Nous knows it. knowing the unity of the I AM, knowing the soul the way the Nous knows it. Once attained that, now he speaks about a second, a deepening of that insight, we can speak about knowing the Nous--to attain a union with the Nous itself. And then even a penetration beyond that, to a "knowledge" of the One. And I think the way we spoke about that as tracing back this principle of Life to its very source. It's like tracing back even that emanant-- the I AM back to the Absolute Soul, and then from that Absolute Soul or Absolute Life in the Nous back to the principle of Life itself within the One. And so in some way those three levels would be like PB speaks about, of a deepening insight.

AD: You remember we spoke about the soul as a unit of life or a unit of mind, alright. So that ultimately we know from sheer speculation that when we speak about Universal Being or the Absolute or the Mind or the One itself, you remember we spoke about it having aspects that were really indistinguishable one from another. It's only from our point of view that we think of the Infinite One as having this aspect--what?--the Nous, the Intellectual aspect. It has an aspect of Life, it has an aspect, so to speak, of Being, alright. You remember we spoke about that, alright, so that the Transcendent in some way or other when we try to conceive of it had these various distinctionless distinctions within itself. And one of them was Life, alright. And this is the origin or the-- yeah, the origin of soul itself. So that ultimately if we wanted to trace, if we wanted to speak, or let's say if we wanted to speak that Plotinus was referring to union with the One, the Absolute, and not with the *soul*(--/,) now that's a distinction. Because he does speak about union with the soul, alright, but he also speaks about union or the supreme identity with the One itself. So then, the only way that we can conceive of it happening is that when the soul, alright, has come to an objective knowledge of itself, that is it has identified with the Nous and now soul knows itself, alright, as this unit of life, without it going anywhere, without it, you know, leaving or moving or anything, it recognizes within itself Absolute Soul, that's the second penetration. And the third is that the very source and origin of the Life comes from the One itself and in that there's the possibility of the supreme identity with the One, with the Absolute. Again, I didn't say it any better than Avery, ... but, it has to-- we have to s-- try to s-- you know, see our way through this.

LD: Or its recognition of the-- maybe another way of saying it, the recognition of the immanent aspect of the One but yet still not its transcendent aspect.

AD: Yes, yeah. Because we spoke about the One as having a Double Act, (one/One), so to speak, and the-- in the Double Act there was the power flowing out from it, alright, and it is that which it recognizes within itself as its transcendent source, alright, but the Transcendent itself, no.