

**Class at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector NY with Anthony Damiani (AD)
January 9, 1980 PB: *Wisdom of the Overself*; "The Unveiling of Reality"**

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, pp. 191-192, AS reading]: "The One becomes a multitude. The World-Mind continually and spontaneously throws its being into living universes and living creatures. But that can never exhaust it for it never really loses anything by this process. The One has produced the Many out of itself, not out of some extraneous material, and cannot be measured by its expression in the universe, for this is always an incomplete one. We cannot arrive at Reality by stitching together millions of little pieces. It is not the whole in this sense. It is not only the totality of things but much more the essence of things.

"We can easily comprehend how one human mind becomes many thoughts in succession yet still remains beyond them as its unlesened self. We can also comprehend how the same mind exists in all these different thoughts. Thus we can more easily comprehend how the World-Mind can manifest in a million forms and yet remain its infinite transcendent self. It is not contained by the universe, unbounded though the latter seems to be, in the sense that all space is not contained by an empty jar. The jar can only give us through what it holds a bare hint of what space is and the universe too can only give us through what it holds a bare hint of what the World-Mind is. The World-Mind is not only in the universe but also metaphysically beyond it. The finitude of the world points to the infinite which transcends the world. The fact that it is but a changeful Appearance suggests the unchanging Reality which underlies it. If the cosmos is truly a self-revelation of the World-Mind, it is nevertheless neither a full nor exhaustive revelation but only a fragmentary one. Thus the world is exhibited before us as self-revelation of Mind's immediate *presence* but, until we enquire more deeply, not of its *nature*."

AD: Well let's take the first sentence. Do you understand that sentence, "the One becomes multitude"?

S: No. [laughter]

AD: But, the next sentence he says the World-Mind.

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, p. 191, AD reading]: **“The World-Mind continually and spontaneously throws its being into living universes...”**

AD: And then he says--

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, p. 191, AD reading]: “But that can never exhaust it for it never really loses anything by this process. The One has produced the Many out of itself, not out of some extraneous material...”

S: Is he equating the One with the World-Mind? Does he mean to do that? I don't know what he means by the One.

AD: You have no idea what he means by the One? Well this is just dialogue -

S: Is he equating the One with the World-Mind or is it something different?

AD: It becomes a multitude. But yet it really doesn't change in any way.

This is a classical problem all traditions have. And in the mythological framework, in the setting that is used by most philosophers, it's spoken of in this way. Not that it actually exists in this way, but it's the way that we can understand.

It's traditional for instance in the Vedanta scriptures they say, “Only pure consciousness is”. Then you have the problem of explaining well how come there's everything else but pure consciousness. I don't see it, I don't know it, but I do know these many things. So they have the same problem too, how from the One arise the Many. So it's very difficult problem.

S: Does he mean the Absolute One or the One Being?

AD: Well, this is the chapter on “The Unveiling of Reality”. The One I assume means here the Real, Reality.

S: Which reality?

AD: *The Reality.*

S: The first quadrant Reality [diagram]?

AD: *The Reality.* There's only *the Reality*, there's only the *Real*.

S: But what about the second quadrant [diagram], isn't that real too? I don't understand the distinction that's being made between the One and the World-Mind in this paragraph.

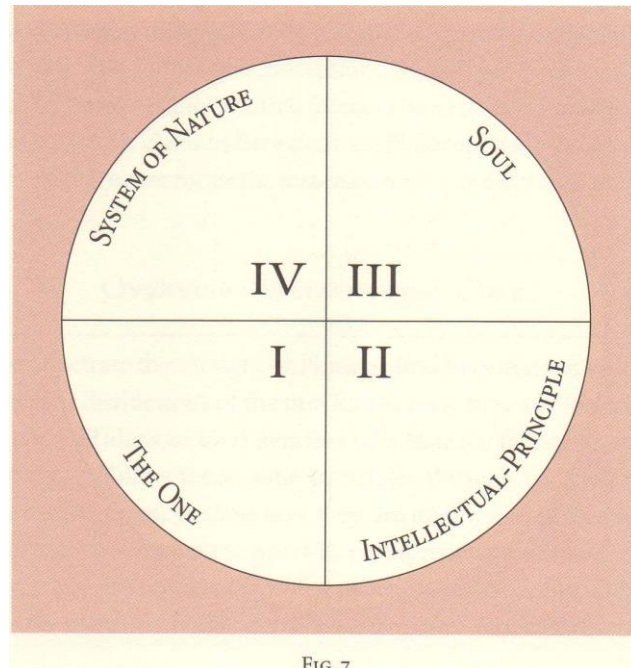


FIG. 7

AD: Well, I would say so, he's making a distinction, the One becomes a multitude, becomes World-Mind.

RG: The way I interpret this is that the World-Mind becomes the multitude, not the One. If you want to call it *the One of the World-Mind*, or this aspect of the World-Mind which is internalized, not having any relation to any world which is this aspect we call the One. But the World-Mind is the aspect that produces the relative.

AD: That produces or manifests--?

RG: Manifests anything, universes.

AD: The World-Mind or the One?

RG: I would think the World-Mind.

AD: Then why does he say the One? Again, just another sentence down.

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, p. 191, AD reading]: **“The One has produced the Many out of itself...”**

RG: He’s trying to integrate the concept of the One and the World-Mind. He’s trying to show you there are two different aspects.

AD: Any other, Alan?

AB: The first sentence in this section, he says the World-Mind is bound up with the universe because it is the universal producing it. So the One or Mind would be a higher reality which is not necessarily conceived of in terms of the universe or bound up within it. As he said, the universe is in space and time whereas the Mind of the World-Mind is beyond it. So, World-Mind is always spoken of in terms of the universe which it gives forth. But Mind is the principle, underlying principle which is independently conceived.

RG: I don’t think it is independently conceived of. He goes on to talk about the first aspect of the World-Mind in alternating activity whereas in the second the World-Mind is a single entity from a philosophic standpoint.

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, p. 193, RG reading]: **“This does not make one less important or less real than the other.”**

LC: I don’t see how, from what we’ve read, how you can make any distinction between the One and the World-Mind. It kind of sounded to me like he was talking about them interchangeably. I don’t understand any of the distinctions.

S: When we’ve spoken of the One in the past and the way I’ve understood it-- I wasn’t sure of the relation of the One to the World-Mind.

AS: We spoke of the One as the source of everything too. In fact, we do trace everything back to the One, and he certainly makes the distinction between Mind-in-Itself and World-Mind. He doesn't always call it the One. In fact, later on in the chapter he calls it Mind or Mind-in-Itself. He very clearly distinguishes it from World-Mind.

S: But is it correct to speak of the One as becoming a multitude, is that the correct way that you would speak of the One?

AS: Is there anything other than the One? He gives the example of Mind. How could it become, how else would you speak about it?

AD: Read one more paragraph please. "We cannot stop the dynamic..."

PB [*The Wisdom of the Overself*, p. 192, MW reading]: "We cannot stop with the dynamic conception of the World-Mind alone. For so long as it is conscious of its relation to the individual centres, so long as it is active in the out-breathing and in-breathing of universes, so long as it has to work with time-- however far beyond and beneath our human range its own amazing time-sense may extend-- so long is it in the realm of appearance and not reality, so long is it in the sphere of thought-forms and not of undifferentiated Thought itself. We cannot stop with this conception therefore if we would know intellectually at least what is absolutely ultimate, what is definitely final in existence. We must proceed on our way. And indeed it is the World-Mind, the living God Itself, which bids whoever comes to the comprehension that it does exist, whoever understands it to be the ultimate ground of all life and being, to look beyond it to THAT which alone possesses the uttermost reality. He must understand that although mentalism reduces the world to idea, it does not reduce reality to idea. Thus we arrive at the problem of the World-Mind's own nature. After the problem of matter it is the deepest and darkest one which confronts us. And because it is the ultimate source of everything it is likewise the ultimate key to everything. For we have reduced all human beings to cells in this cosmic mind and all material things to the co-produced thoughts of both. Everything exists within an ocean of mind just as all waves exist within the watery ocean itself. Cosmic Mind therefore is unique and like nothing else in existence. It is the

ultimate. It is irreducible to anything simpler than itself. The importance of getting even an intellectual insight into its nature and meaning is such that it must simultaneously yield an intellectual insight into the nature and meaning of God and of reality, that is into the most fundamental problem open to human reflection.”

AD: Now, let's read this from Plotinus. Stated a little differently in Plotinus.

Plotinus [V.1.6, AS reading]: **“But how and what does the Intellectual-Principle see and, especially, how has it sprung from that which is to become the object of its vision?”**

AD: Do you understand the question here?

S: How does the World-Mind spring from the One?

AD: How did the Intellectual-Principle, the World-Mind, arise from the One. And the second part? Read the second part.

Plotinus [V.1.6, reading]: **“But how and what does the Intellectual-Principle see...”**

AD: What is it that the World-Mind sees? Two questions he starts out with. Do you get an idea of the level that this man's talking from? Let's repeat the questions again. Read.

Plotinus [V.1.6, AS reading]: **“But how and what does the Intellectual-Principle see and, especially, how has it sprung from that which is to become the object of its vision?”**

AD: Alright, you have some feeling of the depth of the question this man is asking. Go on. Next paragraph.

Plotinus [V.1.6, AS reading]: **“The mind demands the existence of these Beings, but it is still in trouble over the problem endlessly debated by the most ancient philosophers: from such a unity as we have declared The One to be, how does anything at all come into substantial existence, any multiplicity, dyad, or number? Why has the Primal not**

remained self-gathered so that there be none of this profusion of the manifold which we observe in existence and yet are compelled to trace to that absolute unity?"

AD: Do you follow what he's saying?

So you see, this is not a new question that-- it's not in your contemporary journal. It's been around a long time this question. And it's almost an archetypal question that sooner or later you start asking. If there's only God, like in the Bible it says, "Thy Lord thy God is One," then you're going to have a problem explaining your presence, or a dog, or a pole, or a cat, because if "The Lord thy God is One," well, where's all this coming from?

That would be for instance a Christian Biblical way of the question. And I just expressed the Vedantic way, they say there's only Brahman. And then somebody, some smart aleck will come up and say "Well, what about me?"

Yes. You're going to have a problem. Because you're going to have to explain the manifold, the many. If there's only the One, you're going to have to have a problem of explaining, and you can't say it's not two because the problem is still the same. (By) saying it's non-dual doesn't change-- Let's read this paragraph again by Plotinus.

[Plotinus V.1.6,]: "The mind demands the existence of these Beings, but it is still in trouble over the problem endlessly debated by the most ancient philosophers: from such a unity as we have declared The One to be, how does anything at all come into substantial existence, any multiplicity, dyad, or number? Why has the Primal not remained self-gathered so that there be none of this profusion of the manifold which we observe in existence and yet are compelled to trace to that absolute unity?"

AD: Now, in many passages he'll reiterate repeatedly that regardless the Many coming from the One, regardless, the One remains always intact. That's the complication. The One always remains itself, it never changes, it never alters, it's the only Reality--or they would say it's the Ultimate Reality. So, we have a bit of a problem.

Perhaps we could tackle the problem by bringing in something else. And that would be to give some kind of clue as to what Plotinus means by the One, the Supreme, the Infinite, whatever you want to call it. And if we can get a glimpse as to what he means by the One, then maybe we

can understand the possibility of what we mean when we say the Many or the World-Mind arises from the One. So, maybe if we expand, amplify our idea of what the One is, that might give us a clue. By the way, we've done a bit of work on this so for some of you it may seem redundant. Don't make that mistake.

We're going to read from Deck's book which is called *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, his translation of a very difficult passage in Plotinus. But before we do that, why don't we turn to the passage and just read a few of the lines from Plotinus himself.

From now on, by the way, I'm not going to follow PB in the usual way. I'm going to have to bring in anything I can to help you understand some of the ideas. And if I think PB is interfering in helping me to understand or you to understand, I'll throw PB out the window just like I'll throw Plotinus out the window. What I want is for us to understand. If we don't understand, then-- well, you just have to do it again. So who has time to do these things over and over?

Now here are some passages from Plotinus. These are passages that reveal that he had the experience. If you listen very carefully, you can see he's speaking about something *he had gone through*. You can call this the experience of the One, you can call it Nirvikalpa samadhi, you can call it anything you want. Listen to the passages from, what was it, 16, 17, 18?

[Plotinus VI.8.18, AS reading]: "...seek nothing of Him outside; within is to be sought what follows upon Him; Himself do not attempt. He is, Himself, that outer, He the encompassment and measure of all things; or rather He is within, at the innermost depth; the outer, circling round Him, so to speak, and wholly dependent upon Him, is Reason-Principle and Intellectual-Principle--or becomes Intellectual-Principle by contact with Him and in the degree of that contact and dependence; for from Him it takes the being which makes it Intellectual-Principle."

AD: Now here's a slightly easier version to read from Deck, from this tractate that we just read but Deck's translation is a little easier. And we'll try to throw some commentaries into it --

[J. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, "The One," AD reading]: "In these lines the One is said to look at itself..."

AD: You can think of the One as God, the Infinite, it doesn't matter, they're just names.

[Deck, ibid. AD reading]: **“...the One is said to look at itself, and a little further on in the same passage the One is called an eternal super-knowledge: [AD: Quote from Plotinus.] ‘If, now, its the One’s act does not become but is always, and is a kind of wakefulness which is not other than the one who is awake, being a wakefulness and an eternal super-knowledge, it will *be* in the way it is awake. The wakefulness is beyond being and Nous and intelligent life; the wakefulness is itself.”**

AD: You get any feeling for that? This is exactly what the Hindus would call Turiya, pure consciousness, where the awakener is not different than the wakening. That is, the consciousness and he who is conscious are not different from one another. You don’t have two items in this knowledge, you have one supreme undifferenced knowledge.

You could use perhaps the worn-out analogy about water. In other words, you have foam, you have spray, you have waves, and you have the ocean. But all is immediately subsumed and homogenized by the word “water”. All distinctions get abolished as soon as you said “water”. They’re all gone. If you want to, try to think of it that way. Think of the supreme consciousness, this wakefulness, as the totality of all knowledge.

And there is no distinction within all of this knowledge. It will be like the waves, the foam, the spray, the ocean is all water. Now, we have to think of the One in this sense, that it is the supreme knowledge. Everything within it is homogenized. This he would call the wakefulness. A little bit more.

[Deck, ibid. AD reading]: **“He has said a little above that ‘the most lovable in the One is, as it were, the Nous’ [AD: *World-Mind*].”**

AD: The force of this becomes manifest when we realize that he cannot be referring to the hypostasis, the Nous--or what we would call the World-Mind. Plotinus can’t be referring to the World-Mind *in the One* when he uses the word Nous. So then what is he referring to?

[Deck, ibid, AD reading]: **“The One is the Good, the good for the Nous-hypostasis [AD: *World-Mind hypostasis*] as well as for everything else, the supremely lovable. Here he says that the most lovable in this supremely lovable is, as it were, intelligence.”**

AD: Let me read this other passage and we’ll talk about it. He’s still speaking about the One. Now the World-Mind and Nous are used interchangeably so if I don’t say it you’ll know.

[Deck, ibid, AD reading]: **“After remarking that the Nous is multiple (as containing the multiplicity of the ideas and as being composed of the known and the knower), Plotinus**

goes on to say that the One is [AD: Listen.] ‘not, so to speak, imperceptive, but everything of it is in it and with it i.e., it is entirely self-contained; it is entirely self-discerning; life is in it and all things are in it; and its self-knowledge is itself, a self-knowledge by a kind of *synesthesia* being in eternal stasis and in a knowledge otherwise than knowledge according to the Nous [AD: World-Mind].’”

AD: Alright, I admit these things are very difficult but I think you can try to contemplate some of these ideas. What is he saying here? Remember we pointed out that the One has to be completely, totally the One, nothing else but the One. And so we use the analogy of water to include and subsume the variety of forms that water may take.

Now he’s using a similar point of view, he’s thinking of the One as the super-knowledge. We can call it metaphysical infinity but that’s not going to help. And we could call it Active and Passive Perfection but that’s not going to help. So we have to find some kind of words that convey some of these ideas, otherwise you’ll just be reading “the One”, or “World- Mind”, or “Mind”. And I *know* -- you actually think you understand.

[Deck, *ibid*, AD reading]: **“Thus knowledge, which appears in a way in nature, more fully in soul, perfectly in the Nous [AD: World-Mind], is not absent from the highest ‘nature,’ the One: the continuity of knowledge is not abruptly broken in the ascent from the Nous [AD: World-Mind] to the One.**

“A knowledge, which is a self-identity--this is not so alien to Plotinus’ usual notion of knowledge as may first appear. On all levels the nisus of knowledge is towards identity: knowledge becomes truer as knower and known become more identical.”

AD: So then in that case, when you actually *do* reach the One, there should be a *total* identity of knower and known, and no longer even existential diversity, even *that* would be gone.

S: You wouldn’t be able to speak of the One as knowing anything, in the sense of a subject knowing an object.

AD: Yes, because by definition if this is true knowledge, in Plotinus’ sense of the term, it would preclude any kind of knowing. Now that’s paradoxical, isn’t it? If this is the One, and if the One we said is true knowledge, absolutely true, homogeneous, everything is in it and with it and as it, then there can’t be something that knows something else in it. You follow that?

S: It *is* what it knows but-- [AD: Not in a dualistic way.] It's this unity that-- I don't know how to really put it.

AD: The question right now: we're trying to grasp something of the nature of the One. While we're discussing this, we're also discussing for instance what in Hinduism they would call Turiya or pure consciousness. We're discussing the same thing.

So, if we can get a little bit of a glimpse as to what the nature of this kind of absolute knowledge is, or pure consciousness is, we'll have something to work by. But there would be no sense discussing the One if we don't have some clue, some indication, what it is that for instance most of the major traditions speak about and what we ultimately and finally are really interested in.

I mean, it's a worthwhile piece of information to have. It's only conceptual but nonetheless necessary. So that, when you come out of meditation and you see dazzling lights, you won't go around thinking that you saw the One. Because you know that by definition that couldn't be. It can't be the One. It could be other things, yes, but not the One. So the knowledge of the One or the experience of the One is *no* experience.

S: So if you experience the One in meditation, you wouldn't know that you experienced the One until you can be--

AD: Until you get it confirmed by a Sage. We won't know.

AH: Anthony, the passages that were read referred to the One and the self-Act. Would you say something about that also?

AD: Alright, we'll talk a little about that too. He speaks about the One as being in eternal repose, and he speaks about the One as having this self-tendance or self-originating knowledge. So he's speaking of the One as having two aspects, but these two aspects together are not aspects, they're one and the same thing. Like I say the pole is six feet high and weighs twenty pounds. I'm not speaking about two things, I'm speaking about one thing.

Now he's speaking about the One as having these two phases. On the one hand he refers to it as Act and on the other hand he refers to it as Repose. In Chinese philosophy you have the same thing. They call it Active Perfection and Passive Perfection. And the two of them are the same, they're both one.

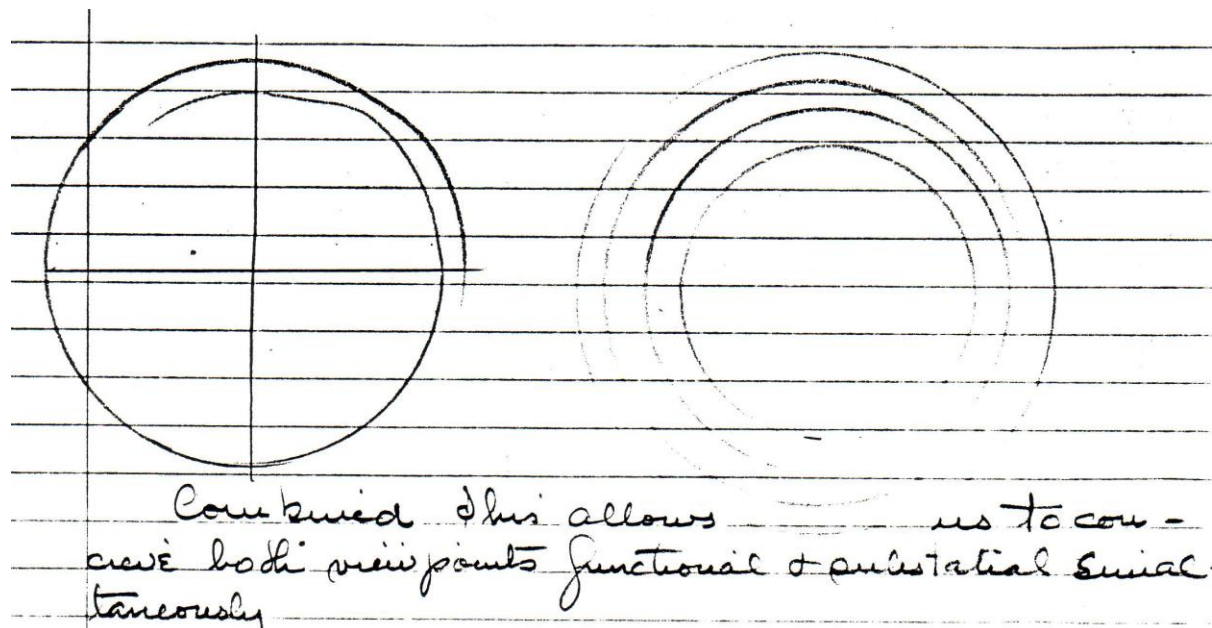
Passive Perfection and Active Perfection. In the Shaivite philosophy you have what they call Parasamvit with two principles, Siva and Sakti. And that sounds very foreign, you say, you could just as well speak in Greek for all I care. But, if we use the English equivalents, we could say this entity has two aspects: on the one hand, the totality of all the samskaras, and on the other hand, the boundary of that totality. And these two constitute the entity, the one entity.

So we're taking a one entity, we're dividing it in two. *But the continuum remains there.* You would have to keep this in mind. While I divide the entity in two, the entity as a continuum *remains there.* It doesn't dissolve, it doesn't disappear. You follow that?

AH: If we juxtapose terms like repose and action, it's hard to conceive of those simultaneously.

AD: Yes because they're usually, in our thinking they're opposites.

So that they would be very hard to reconcile in one entity. But if we take the example of an entity, a person for instance, he has certain samskaras or vasanas or memory traces, the boundary of the entirety of all these memory traces could be conceived of as the passive side, and the activity of these samskaras can be conceived of as the active side, and these two together constitute this unity. I don't know if that helps.



“Combined this allows us to conceive both viewpoints functional & substantial simultaneously.”

AD: So then we begin to get some indication that the nature of the One includes integrally and principally everything within itself but in this homogenized way that we spoke about. Now if we can think of the One or the nature of the One in that way, then the next step will be a little easier, how does the World-Mind arise from that. Because if the World-Mind is not within it to begin with, we'll never be able to get it out. So then in some mysterious way, the One includes the World-Mind within itself and the World-Mind that it includes within itself is something of a higher, a superior, of a more transcendent mode in the One than the way it actually exists as the World-Mind, to use Plotinus' expression. In other words, the copy of the World-Mind which exists in the One is truer than the World-Mind as it actually exists. 01/09/1980

AD: The way he says of it, that which is perfect generates, that which is eternally perfect generates eternally. Now you try to get out of that. That would mean that as long as there's a One, or we can speak about the One's being or the One being around somewhere, there will always be its manifestations. 01/09/1980