

Place of Ego in World-Order

How can a person fully express himself unless he fully develops himself? The spiritual evolution which requires him to abandon the ego runs parallel to the mental evolution which requires him to perfect it. (8:1.158)

The highest goal of the quest is not illumination gained by destruction of the ego but rather by perfection of the ego. It is the function of egoism which is to be destroyed, not that which functions. The ego's rulership is to go, not the ego itself. 8.1.189

It is both true and untrue that we cannot take up the ego with us into the life of mystical illumination. The ego is after all only a reflection, extremely limited and often distorted, of the Higher Self . . . but still it *is* a reflection. If we could bring it into correct alignment with, and submission to, the Higher Self, it would then be no hindrance to the illumined life. The ego cannot, indeed, be destroyed so long as we need its services while in the flesh; but it can be subjugated and turned into a servant instead of permitting it to remain a master. When this is understood, the philosophical ideal of a fully developed, mastered, and richly rounded ego acting as a channel for the inspiration and guidance of the Higher Self will be better appreciated. A poverty-stricken ego will naturally form a more limited channel for the expression of the Higher Self than would a more evolved one. The real enemy to be overcome is not the entity ego, but the function of egoism. 8:1.206

The ego to which he is so attached turns out on enquiry to be none other than the presence of World-Mind within his own heart. If identification is then shifted by constant practice from one to the other, he has achieved the purpose of life. Notebooks 8.1.127

Let them not waste so many words about or against this little ego of ours, decrying its character or denying its existence, but try to understand what is really happening in its short life. Let them find out what is actually being wrought out within and around it. Let them recognize that the Governor of the World is related to it and that we are steeped in the Divinity whether we are aware of it or not. 8:1.130

Students who have come finally to philosophy from the Indian Advaita Vedanta, bring with them the belief that the divine soul having somehow lost its consciousness is now seeking to become self-conscious again. They suppose that the ego originates and ends on the same level--divinity--and therefore the question is often asked why it should go forth on such a long and unnecessary journey. This question is a misconceived one. It is not the ego itself which ever was consciously divine, but its source, the Overself. The ego's divine character lies in its essential but hidden being, but it has never known that. The purpose of gathering experience (the evolutionary process) is precisely to bring it to such awareness. The ego comes to slow birth in finite consciousness out of utter unconsciousness and, later, to recognition and union with its infinite source. That source, whence it has emanated, remains untouched, unaffected, ever knowing and serenely witnessing. The purpose in this evolution is the ego's own advancement. When the Quest is reached, the Overself reveals its presence fitfully and brokenly at first but later the hide-and-seek game ends in loving union. 26.4.256

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. (25:2.204)

Perhaps one day some bright mind will write a book entitled Inspired Egoism to bring people into the understanding that the ego too has its place in the scheme of things. It is the little circle within the larger one of the Overself, and if it remains conscious of its true relationship to the Overself, it may still rest there and carry on with its functions. 8:1.203

Live Now

It is our innate inertia which keeps us set in habitual outlooks and thus keeps us victims of our own past experience. We copy again every day what we did before, what we thought and felt before. We live in both the conscious and the subconscious memories, desires, fears which time has accumulated for us, and that the ego has created to bind us to itself. We are ruled by compulsions, fixations, and neuroses--some of them not even known--that freeze us, preventing further real advancement. We rarely enter the day to gain really fresh experience, think really new thoughts, or assume really different attitudes. We are prisoners of time. This is because we are so ego-bound. The compulsion which makes us conform ourselves to dead yesterday ideas and practices, concepts and habits, is an unreal one, an illusory one. In letting ourselves become victims of the past by letting it swallow up the present, we lose the tremendous meaning and tremendous opportunity which the present contains. Whereas the Overself speaks to us from tomorrow's intuitive understanding, the ego speaks to us through memory. Its past enslaves us, preventing a new and higher way of viewing life from being born.

But it is possible to arouse ourselves and to begin viewing life as it unfolds in the Eternal Present, the Now, with wholly fresh eyes. Every morning is like a new reincarnation into this world. It is a fresh chance to be ourselves, not merely echoes of our own past ideological fixations. Let us take it then for what it is and live each moment anew.

When a master mystic like Jesus tells men to refrain from being anxious about the morrow and to let today's evil be sufficient for today, He speaks out of his own consciousness of living in this Eternal Now. Consequently, he spoke not of periods involving twelve or twenty-four hours, but of pinpoints of a moment. He told them to live timelessly, to let the dead past bury itself. He is indeed a Christian, a Christ-self man, who lives cleanly and completely in the present--free, uncontrolled, and unconditioned by what he was, believed, or desired yesterday. Perspectives p. 242

Way of Wu-Wei

It comes to this, that we have to learn the art of doing nothing! It would seem that everyone could practise this without the slightest preparation or training, but the fact is that hardly anyone can do so. For the expression "doing nothing" must be interpreted in an absolute sense. We must learn to be totally without action, without thought--without any tension or manifestation of the ego. The Biblical expression "Be still!" says exactly the same thing but says it positively where the other says it negatively. If we really succeed in learning this art, and sit absolutely still for long periods of time, we shall be given the best of all rewards, the one promised by the Bible: we shall "know that I am God." [23:7.258](#)

Wu Wei has a double meaning: first, letting Life, Mind, act through you by yourself, becoming still, thought-free, and empty of ego--you are then not doing anything, but being done to, being used; second, pursuing truth impersonally. The usual ways seek personal attainment, achievement, salvation. The aspirant thinks or speaks of "my mind" or "my purification" or "my progress"; hence such ways are self-enclosed, egoistic. Whatever repression of ego that there is occurs only on the surface and merely drives it down to hide in the subconscious, whence it will re-emerge later. These methods are Long Path ones, hence are destined to end in futility and despair. The deeper way of Wu Wei is to lose the ego by doing nothing to seek truth or to improve oneself; adopting no practice; following no path.

The sun's warmth and beauty brings out the flower's growth. It does not strive, struggle, or push. This is a good simile of the Short Path's final phase, taught also in the Chinese doctrine of wu-wei (inaction) and the Indian doctrine of asparsa yoga (without-effort method). ([23:5.207](#))

The Short Path turns realization over to Overself so that it is not your concern any longer. This does not mean that you do not care whether you find truth or not, but that whereas ordinary care for it arises out of desire of the ego or anxiety of the ego or egoistic need of comfort, escape, or relief, Short Path care arises out of the stillness of mind, the serenity of faith, and the acceptance of the universe. ([23:5.228](#))

Surrender: turn to the Overself

He who enters upon this quest will have plenty to do, for he will have to work on the weaknesses in his character, to think impartially, to meditate regularly, and to aspire constantly. Above all, he will have to train himself in the discipline of surrendering the ego. P. 21

We who honour philosophy so highly cannot afford to be other than honest with ourselves. We have to acknowledge that the end of all our striving is surrender. No human being can do other than this--an utterly humble prostration, where we dissolve, lose the ego, lose ourselves--the rest is paradox and mystery. (20:5.11)

This whittling away of the ego may occupy the entire lifetime and not seem very successful even then, yet it is of the highest value as a preparatory process for the full renunciation of the ego when--by Grace--it suddenly rises up in the heart. (8:4.422)

By thought, the ego was made; by thought, the ego's power can be unmade. But the thought must be directed toward a higher entity, for the ego's willingness to attack itself is only a pretense. Direct it constantly to the Overself, be mentally devoted to the Overself, and emotionally love the Overself. Can it then refuse to help you? 18.1.77

Until it is brought to his attention, he may not know that the idol at whose feet he is continually worshipping is the ego. If he could give to God the same amount of remembrance that he gives to his ego, he could quite soon attain, and become established in, that enlightenment to which other men devote lifetimes of arduous effort. 8.4.153

The principle which makes union with the Overself possible is always the same, albeit on different levels. Whether it appears as humility in prayer, passivity to intuition, stillness in meditation, or serenity despite untoward circumstances, these attitudes temporarily weaken the ego and lessen its domination. They temporarily silence the ego and give the Overself the opportunity to touch us or work through us. So long as the ego dominates us, we are outside the reach of the Overself and separated from its help. 22/5/3

What or who is seeking enlightenment? It cannot be the higher Self, for that is itself of the nature of Light. There then only remains the ego! This ego, the object of so many denunciations and denigrations, is the being that, transformed, will win truth and find Reality even though it must surrender itself utterly in the end as the price to be paid. 8.5.435

Revisit quotes in booklet 1 on Overself nature and short path