

# **Class at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector NY with Anthony Damiani (AD)**

**June 13, 1984**

## **Paul Brunton (PB) Paras, Ego, Astrology**

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Contents: when we identify with the ego, we shut ourselves out from the Overself; the ego forms and constricts the infinity of life; the ego as it relates to astrology; letting go of the fixity of ideas and ways of life; the Undivided Mind is constantly creating ego-consciousness (like waves); the fixed pattern of ideas (based on the natal chart) becomes psyche

Books read from or referenced:

Brunton, Paul, *The Notebooks of Paul Brunton*, including volume I entitled *Perspectives*. Quotes from Brunton are often referred to as "paras."

Note: This was transcribed from audio. Some excerpts of this transcript were published in *Standing in Your Own Way*, by Anthony Damiani (Larson Publications, 1993).

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[In the first part of the class Anthony did not speak. The PB paras below were read and the students discussed the question: How is the ego connected to the Overself?]

PB (8.4.79): "Most people are prisoners of their own opinions and judgements, their own point of view. The intellectual humility required either to loosen or even to let go what they hold to tightly and often defend so arrogantly or ignorantly, is one of the first qualities they need to cultivate if they are to begin the quest of truth aright. So long as men are so strongly attached to their own personal wills and limited judgements, they cannot be expected to heed the impersonal teachings and intellect-transcending injunctions of the great prophets."

PB (8.4.84): "If anyone complains that despite all his efforts he is unable to see the Overself, it can only be because he stubbornly persists in seeing his own 'I' with every effort. It is this which blocks the other from his sight. Hence it is this that he must remove."

PB (8.4.18): "So long as the ego's life is disconnected in its own consciousness from the Overself's, so long will it be unable to avail itself of the benefits and advantages which flow from connection in its subconsciousness."

S: How about another interpretation--that the subconscious and the Overself are two completely contrary principles, and that if the ego is related to the one, it can't be related to the other? Let's say the subconscious is the dragon, the dragonic consciousness. As long as the vasanas are operative, the Overself's life cannot be experienced.

AD: In other words, suppose you imagine that the life of the dragon belongs *to* the Overself, then what?

S: Then that would be taking the point of view larger than the individual soul, that would be re-integrating the World Idea back into the--

AD: So maybe it would be a good idea if we could try to make clear what we mean: "ego," "world," "consciousness". What do we mean when we say that? Let's try reading a few. Maybe we could come up with an illustration of what we mean by these terms.

S: We have to really feel this cul-de-sac that we have as being identified with the ego and thereby shutting ourselves out of the Overself consciousness. You asked was there a middle ground, and I thought of this quote in terms of the connection to the subconsciousness suggesting a kind of middle ground:

PB (8.4.18): "So long as the ego's life is disconnected in its own consciousness from the Overself's, so long will it be unable to avail itself of the benefits and advantages which flow from connection in its subconsciousness."

PB (8.1.62): "The ego expresses desires and preferences, the intellect thinks and remembers, the body's sense organs experience and perceive the world outside. None of these three is the real 'I'-ness of a man."

PB (22.3.409 and *Perspectives*): "If a man asks why he can find no trace of God's presence in himself, I answer that he is full of evidence, not merely traces. God is present in him as consciousness, the state of being aware; as thought, the capacity to think; as activity, the power to move; and as stillness, the condition of the ego, emotion, intellect, and body which finally and clearly reveals what these other things simply point to. 'Be still, and know that I am God' is a statement of being whose truth can be tested by experiment and whose value can be demonstrated by experience."

S: So we're looking for stuff to distinguish the ego, the world, and consciousness?

AD: Just a few quotes where we could try to understand, what is the ego: is it the body? The body is part of the world, is part of the World Idea, part of the imaged world, and it's distinct from that world, or distinguished from that world, so that we could separate these two in our minds. And then when he says that resident in the body, or presiding in the body, is this power to think, to be aware, these things would belong to the Soul, so that we have these three factors we're separating in our experience: 1) awareness of a world, 2) the ego and 3) awareness.

So that we have these three factors that are part of our experience. Now, they're evidently mixed up, so that we have to try to unscramble what is the ego, what is the world image or the world, and what is the Overself. You have to try to unscramble them, separate them, from one another.

Now it's true, if we took away the consciousness from the body, we wouldn't be able to say that that ego is aware of a world or it can think or that it could move. It wouldn't be able to do that. So we'd have the problem of saying, if we took this awareness and we distinguished it from the body or the ego, then what would be the ego if we did that? If we took away the consciousness, distinguished it from the body, would that be the ego? In other words, would that body--if the light penetrates into it, or consciousness penetrates into it--would that become the ego then?

Anyway, that fellow, he's never around for more than a moment.

S: I've got a few quotes.

AD: Let's hear just a few quotes to see if we could--

PB (8.2.14 & *Perspectives*): "If we analyse the ego, we find it to be a collection of past memories retained from experience and future hopes or fears which anticipate experience. If we try to seize it, to separate it out by itself, we do not find it to exist in the present moment, only in what has gone and what is to come. In fact, it never really exists in the *NOW* but only seems to. This means that it is a phantom without substance, a false *idea*."

PB (8.1.7 and *Perspectives*): "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."

PB (8.1.102): "The personal ego of man forms itself out of the impersonal life of the universe like a wave forming itself out of the ocean. It constricts, confines, restricts, and limits that infinite life to a small finite area. The wave does just the same to the water of the ocean. The ego shuts out so much of the power and intelligence contained in the universal being that it seems to belong to an entirely different and utterly inferior order of existence. The wave, too, since it forms itself only on the surface of the water gives no indication in its tiny stature of the tremendous depth and breadth and volume of water beneath it.

Consider that no wave exists by itself or for itself, that all waves are inescapably parts of the visible ocean. In the same way, no individual life can separate itself from the All-Life but is always a part of it in some way or other. Yet the idea of separateness is held by millions. This idea is an illusion. From it springs their direst troubles. The work of the quest is simply this: to free the ego from its self-imposed limitations, to let the wave of conscious being subside and straighten itself out into the waters whence it came. The little wave is then reconverted into the finite Overself."

PB (8.1.206 & *Perspectives*): “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.”

AD: If you could read it again, and be a little patient, and I’ll ask-- Erase that board.

S: Start from the beginning? Anthony, you want to start from the very beginning?

AD: Yes. If we could imagine the earth, rotating or going around the sun, and surrounding the earth there’s what we refer to as the dragonic belt, that life which is around the earth, and which we call the Soul of the earth. Now if we use, and this is unfair because I’m trying to explain PB outside of PB, but this might help us. Now if you start with the first sentence.

PB (8.1.102): “The personal ego of man forms itself out of the impersonal life of the universe. . .”

AD: Right there. If you say the personal life of the person, like my ego, is formed out of this universal life, which is this life which is all around the earth, the soul of the earth, which we even have a name for in Greek, the Greeks have a name for it.

How do I separate myself out from that universal life? At a certain moment, let’s say, I incarnate. At that moment there are certain aspects, etc. This is what I refer to as the ego. This is what has separated itself out from all of that life and all the degrees, and isolated itself, or let’s say, carved out an existence for itself within that total life. If I could be allowed to look at it that way. So if you read a little more.

PB (8.1.102): “. . .It constricts, confines, restricts, and limits that infinite life to a small finite area. . .”

AD: Isn’t that exactly what I do once that identification takes place? No longer am I this tremendous and infinite reservoir of understanding and knowledge, which let’s say the 360 degrees would represent, but I’m restricted to these things which I picked out, which would be my peculiar tendencies and habits. Because all you have to do is go to those points in your chart, and you see those are your habits, those are your tendencies--that’s the way you operate, and you cling to this way of operating.

In other words, for instance, if I think of my Saturn degree, which says I've got to see the practical and I've got to see the idealistic, and I've got to work with the two of them. But if I cling to this here, then I limit myself to looking at everything this way and the consequence of that is that I become a finite creature--it doesn't matter how great the idea may be, even if I operate with it archetypally, I still have made myself into a finite creature. You follow this now?

Let's go a little more.

PB (8.1.102): "...The wave does just the same to the water of the ocean. The ego shuts out so much of the power and intelligence contained in the universal being that it seems to belong to an entirely different and utterly inferior order of existence..."

AD: Of course, we could see that in the sense when we make a comparison--between the sage and an ordinary man. It's like the ordinary man belongs to an entirely different order of being--or we could say that the sage belongs to an (entirely) different type.

But actually the sage would be the one to whom all this is accessible--he's open to it. Not that-- karma will determine that. But that the Ideas are open to him, he's open inwardly, and what he has to deal with, or what he has to give forth, he will. You see that? Ok. Certainly someone like the sage would be like a different order of existence than the one that we ordinarily are acquainted with.

S: The sentence says "the ego shuts out so much of the power and intelligence contained in the universal being"-- I think so far the quote is talking about the ego as being the same in substance with the universal being--is that right?

AD: Yes, yes.

S: Is the word "substance" correct? But could you say that there is more than just substance involved here? We're talking about the universal being that has qualities, certain--

AD: Yes. But by qualities, you mean Ideas.

S: Ideas, that's what I mean.

AD: Yes, the same like the Moslems and Plotinus--as soon as you say qualities--Boom!--you're speaking about Ideas; otherwise you're speaking about nothing. I wouldn't be able to understand what you're talking about. So as soon as you bring in the ideas, what we're saying is that this universal being has substance. What is its substance? All those Ideas.

I think we have pointed out over and over again that the usage of the term "substance" is not in the sense of "matter", but "ideational consciousness", something like that. We think of the wisdom of God or the Ideas of God, and we could think of them as a substance, pure substance, pure being. This is not substance [knocking on wood]. This is illusion.

S: So we're saying that the ego participates--

AD: --in that universal substance.

S: In those Ideas, but in an elusive sort of way, that gives rise to an elusive illusionary--

AD: Yes. And if you introspect into your behavior, if you watch the way you operate, you'll see that those are the degrees. Like I come in pounding, "Let's get to the bottom of this"--and you say there's that guy's Mercury jumping all over the place. And the next week I come back, and I do it again, and the next week. After a while you say, "Well, gee, can't he let go of that tendency?" Those are habits.

But, of course, I think you got the point that has to be realized, is that these habits are derived from the great archetypal Ideas which is this pure substance or this universal being of the earth, the earth's life. Alright, let's continue a little more with the fantasy.

S: What do you have to let go of then? You said you have to realize that these ideas, these habits--

AD: You have to let go of the fixity that they operate with--that I always have to do it this way. That's a mistake on my part.

S: How would that practically look like? How would you train yourself? Can you really train yourself?

AD: Well, you noticed when you were with PB--was there anything fixed about his behavior? From moment to moment he kept you jumping and hopping--he couldn't figure out what the next moment was, because it was so spontaneous, he wasn't operating with any of these fixed ways-- that you could say, "that's the way PB works." Because when you're with him, you can't do that--you can't anticipate his next move. Whereas I could anticipate your next move because I know what your habits are like.

That's what astrology is based on, a great deal. The fact that our habits are so strong that the astrologer could depend on them to guarantee their performance. Let's read a little more.

PB (8.1.102): ". . . The wave, too, since it forms itself only on the surface of the water gives no indication in its tiny stature of the tremendous depth and breadth and volume of water beneath it. . ."

AD: Now, do you have some clue? I would try to put it this way--you have some clue, and the nature of this vast subconscious which is operating within you. In other words, all those degrees--that's your subconscious. And that's included in your makeup. But you restrict yourself, you say "No, I'm only these ten--I don't know any of that other stuff".

You remember how often you people would deny the fact that the I did it, and you'd say, "It's not my 'I' that did it, it's someone else's 'I' --it's the Witness I that did it."

S: Or "I don't have any planets in Virgo."

AD: Yes.

S: So when you say those seven or ten planets, why you would call them the conscious ego? Would it be because through them you can impose some sort of structure on the consciousness that it flows through?

AD: Yes--that universal substance--yes. Now that structure, the other interesting thing about it, is we could say that it's *self-formulating*. It goes on recuperating, and reformulating itself over and over again, from incarnation to incarnation too, let alone within one life.

S: Those other 350 degrees or 353 degrees--you don't have, I don't have, a function that can appropriate them, so they remain sub-conscious.

AD: I'm sorry--?

S: Because we don't have a built-in habitual function that can go on repeating those other 353 degrees independently of the transits, those other 353 degrees would be called our subconsciousness as different from what we have a function at our disposal to play with regardless.

AD: Wouldn't you say that that would be our subconscious? That we are identified with what we call the transits? And that would be the subconscious, those functions [inaudible].

S: Usually when the word subconscious comes up, especially in context like this--I've heard not "subconscious" but "superconscious".

AD: I have no associations with the word. He says "subconscious". I'm trying to understand it in terms of the context he's using it.

S: I wanted to understand if there would be a difference in using the term--

AD: It's just a word and we have to try to understand. You could think of it as all the ideas, and then the planetary functioning as the tattvas, and the meaning of these two together in their operation would be the result of what we call the [inaudible].

“Subconscious” is just a word. I have to understand what they mean by it, and not assume what they mean. I don't even assume that there is an opposite to it. Subconscious and superconscious-- I don't assume that, because there may not be any.

S: I'll drop it.

AD: Let's read a little bit more.

PB (8.1.102): “. . . Consider that no wave exists by itself or for itself. . .”

AD: Can you see that astrologically? There can't be any of that selection by itself. And the waves are constantly being made, the transits never stop, so there's waves being constantly made. Don't worry-- they'll never come to an end.

You remember Mahler and Brahms on the bridge, and Brahms was saying “No more great melodies”, and Mahler says “Look, there's the last wave.” [laughter]. Insofar as there's these transits going on, these creations of ego will be taking place. Go on.

PB (8.1.102): “. . . Consider that no wave exists by itself or for itself, that all waves are inescapably parts of the visible ocean. In the same way, no individual life can separate itself from the All-Life but is always a part of it in some way or other. . .”

AD: So if we think of this formulation that's taking place, then we could think of the earth's undivided mind, the whole of the solar system, we could think of that as this infinite (life) that is constantly organizing these points or centers of consciousness that we're going to call the ego. They cannot be separated from the infinite life, but the ego will do that. Insofar as it does that, it immediately cuts itself off from that.

Once I start believing in my ego as the reality, I've given up any belief in the higher power. But don't take the converse now very easily. Don't say “I believe in the higher power,” and therefore you think that you believe in the higher power. [laughter]. Wait until you find out if you really believe in it. And you find out maybe you don't believe in it, but it was just in your imagination.

So you have to wait for the finding out whether you really believe in it. But there again, I mean--I reduce things right down to the earth, as universal, because that's big enough for me. My solar system is big enough. I don't like to go beyond it; I know the others want to go beyond it. Any more to that?

PB (end of 8.1.102): “. . . Yet the idea of separateness is held by millions. This idea is an illusion. From it springs their direct troubles. The work of the quest is simply this: to free the ego from its self-imposed limitations, to let the wave of conscious being subside and straighten itself out into the waters whence it came. The little wave is thus reconverted into the infinite Overself.”

S: I'm confusing two levels in this quote--one is where the ego in being precipitated out, was coming out of the nature aspects.

AD: Out of the earth's soul.

S: From what you just said at the end, and the way PB uses the Overself-- the ego originates from the Overself, from the solar logos.

AD: Yes, but we would point out that at the moment that your ego comes into being, the moment of incarnation is chosen by the soul, at that moment it chooses to incarnate, and we have to recognize that the individual soul, and the solar logos or the cosmic soul, are together--they're not enemies or something, they're working together-- “This is the moment for me to incarnate.” The soul incarnates at that moment, *it is the infinite life* which that individual ego is coming from. Now that infinite light is in no way sectionalized. That's why when we were speaking about the life of the ego, my preference was to speak about it as a stream of light, the light pouring forth from the soul as a stream.

And that this could be regarded as the Bodhicitta or the ongoing soul which is going to go through all the kingdoms of nature. So in that sense I'm using these terms. I don't see why you see a confusion there.

S: Sometimes I think that the nature principle is great enough to provide...

AD: I don't know what you mean by nature principle. You mean the universal substance or universal life of the earth? [S: Yes.] You don't think it great enough to provide--?

S: I would think that it *was* great enough to provide complete sustenance and development for the ego, for its ultimate--

AD: Wouldn't you think it's great enough to provide a *vehicle* that the soul could inhabit?

S: Would PB's ego that is fully developed have its limitations, then (right to that dragonic belt)?

AD: Naturally, the limitations would be the body you have, and the ego that came along with that, that has taken possession of that body. But they're not fixed limitations--they could be overwhelmed, they could be overcome.

But I think the important thing in the discussion was to recognize the fact that what he's calling the subconscious are all these degrees, and the functioning of these degrees is the production of individual animal bodies. These animal bodies are a storehouse. I mean, they represent or they symbolize all these ideas are inherent in the body of a person. That's a tremendous wisdom-knowledge which goes into making the body of a person.

Now, if you take it from there, then we'd have to speak about a consciousness coming into that and taking possession of it. So I'm still trying to get to the fundamental thing--the ego, the world, and the consciousness--so that I could understand a little bit something of the nature of the ego. When the consciousness permeates that body, then an ego and a world arises at the same time.

Now I have to try to understand, "Well, what do I mean when I say ego and what do I mean when I say consciousness?" The world isn't aware of itself--the ego can't be aware of itself, that which is aware of the ego is not the ego. So I have to separate these things for my own understanding and I get a better picture of what I'm talking about.

The ego is a very slippery thing, very slippery--the profoundest depths of pleasure and pain is there-- (it has no other way). It goes all the way up to the top with us. I'm sorry. Well, I want to stop talking for a little while. Why don't you read a few more-- because I can see the master concept of philosophy.

Anyone who doesn't know about the ego is not on the quest. He's on a TV journey.

S: In the quote where he asked about the presence of God, and our awareness, into the organized system of habits and tropes, a residue of ideations or thoughts, comes this conscious manifold, under the Ray of the Soul, and now if you have the view of God as objective-- If you ask if the presence of God is that which has the power of awareness within you, it's referring to your own soul, and that's the very deputy or presence of God as your own Soul, which is lighting up this conglomeration of thoughts [AD assents several times within this statement.]

AD: He says that's the proof of God.

S: That's the proof of God, not the external--not the appearance of either the world or the ego within that but in fact that you can be aware--

S: In the quote he was equating the term conscious being with the ego--

AD: That's something else. The straightening out of the conscious being is like "let go", "relax", "let the psyche be", "let it be what it is", so that it could go along--you know, the Tao, go along with things the way they are.

S: In this quote he used the analogy of the water as representing universal life, or universal existence, but in the end he uses the water as representing the infinite Overself "the little wave is thus reconverted into the infinite Overself". That confuses me in terms of the distinction between the awareness and the life principle.

AD: He won't make those distinctions. We would, because from Plotinus we would be coming from the point of view of Being Life and Intellect, and so we would make these distinctions, but he won't. The experience of the higher self, Being Life and Intellect of the higher self is one and the same. I mean, you can come out of the experience and say, "That's true being", or you can come out and say, "That's true life", or you can come out and say, "That's true understanding"--they're all irrelevant. What you're trying to say is that this is Being-Life-Intellect, and everything else isn't [inaudible].

S:--the relationship between the terms that we call Being Life and Intellect--those terms and the Overself, for PB, is that Being Life and Intellect are present to us through our Overself--they're funneled through it?

AD: We simply don't have the words, because we would say if we have the experience of the soul, we would say, "It's the wisest," that's like saying that's the intellect. Or we would say "It is the Life" because it is immortal. (Of its existence there), and you know that that's as true being. So when you come out and you use these words, one has to keep in mind that they're not divided like that in the Overself, only in our understanding of it. Would you read a few more quotes?

PB (8.3.1): "The ego is a knot tied in the psyche of our inner being, itself being compounded from a number of smaller knots. There is nothing fresh to be gathered in, for b-e-i-n-g is always there, but something is to be undone, untied."

AD: You have to untie the knots, is that what he said?

S: It sounded like there's nothing fresh because being is always there?

AD: Well, would you like to try that using the same analogy, to start again?

PB (8.3.1): "The ego is a knot tied in the psyche of our inner being. . ."

S: So the fixed pattern of the ideas in the natal chart is a knot in the psyche.

AD: Exactly. A knot in our psyche-- that says, "I've got to operate this way--that's a knot, I'm tied into it, and every time I want to operate, I've got to operate this way." Ok?

PB (8.3.1): ". . .itself being compounded from a number of smaller knots."

S: It's a complex of fixed points of view.

AD: So it seems that he's saying the more aspects you've got in your chart, the more knotted up you are [laughter] --the less aspects-- How about PB's chart?--very few aspects, if any.

PB (8.3.1): “There is nothing fresh to be gathered in, for b-e-i-n-g is always there.. . “

S: In other words that fixed pattern is not outside of the flow of life or the wave that he was separating of --that water, it's always there. You can't gather it into yourself, because you can only untie the fixity. It's the fixity that's artificial, not the fluidity that's trying to be engendered in an artificial way. You don't try to become more fluid as though it were something that could ever cease to exist--it's only the temporary though perpetual rigidity of the ego that can be worked on--you can't become Being because Being already is.

S: That's an interesting way of putting it. No amount of artificial complexity can ever duplicate the natural fluidity of the real life of the Soul. No matter how much you try to get in the flow by adding more and more fixed things, it just knots it up even more.

S: We'll go back to sun-sign astrology.

AD: That's why I used to use the paper you made for me. I used to look for the days where I had no aspects and try to make decisions then.

PB (8.2.7): “That which claims to be the ‘I’ turns out to be only a part of it, the lesser part, and not the real ‘I’ at all. It is a complex of thoughts.”

AD: So for us then the real “I” would be like the total functioning of the earth's powers that we would call all the planets. Could we think of it that way? In other words the undivided mind of the earth, which at the same time is equivalent also to the soul powers of the soul--

S: --of the individual soul, that coincidence of the soul powers of the individual Overself, and the powers as activities of the undivided mind of the earth, is the flow of consciousness, being, of authentic individuality, that projects itself into the fixed pattern that embeds itself in the tropes of the mind-body complex, the psyche.

S: Why can't you make a jump to say that the real “I” is the awareness and leave out that middle realm?

AD: Well, you can, but you know he does have a quotation where he says there's awareness of awareness and then there's just pure awareness--so you're going to have to have that intermediary step, but it's not necessary--you remember that quote?

There is a quote where he says there's an awareness of awareness, and then there is pure awareness itself. So the awareness of awareness would be like an intermediate step, and pure awareness itself would be like the identification either with the undivided mind or with the powers of the soul, the sun soul. That would be pure awareness.

S: So you're saying the awareness of awareness would be--

AD: From that, would stream forth, or there would be the awareness-- from that would stream forth the fact that there could be a Witness I which is, so to speak, aware of a subject-object relationship which is included within itself. But I hate to use this language because it's going to be immediately objectified.

S: There's a wonderful quote--

AD: Sure, let's hear that.

PB (8.1.1): "That element in his consciousness which enables him to understand that he exists, which causes him to pronounce the words, 'I Am,' is the spiritual element, here called the Overself. It is really his basic self for the three activities of thinking feeling and willing are derived from it, are ripples spreading out of it, are attributes and functions which belong to it. But as we ordinarily think feel and act, these activities do not express the Overself because they are under the control of a different entity, the personal ego."

[The class does not end here, but the rest of the audio is missing.]

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