An Ecology of Love (Part 4)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 1:04:42

So as I keep saying, eros involves—and this is the fullness of the meaning of that word—eros involves psyche and logos. And in that infinite dance, there's an infinity of possibilities of view and perception and experience and kinds of love.

To point out a few things in the way that it involves psyche and logos and views: in the infinity of possibilities, it will always include a view of self. Or rather, included in that dynamic is always a view of self and of the other—whatever other is in this case, predominantly in this talk, the earth or nature. So always included in this co-fertilization of eros, psyche, and logos is a view of self and a view of other at any level of perception, at any stage to which it arrives and opens.

The view of self and the view of other—these will be important factors. As I said right at the beginning of the talk, views condition; dependent on views, doors open or close. Specifically in terms of action and how we behave, and the styles of engagement or activism—or not, whether we somehow don't engage, are not active, do not respond to the crises of the earth—wrapped up in all that is the view, not just of the other, of the earth, but the view of the self as well. They go together and they're part of the whole dynamic of eros, psyche, and logos.

So just to say a little regarding self-view in all this: it's going to be part of it. Listen to this from Wendell Berry. In regard to this whole dynamic and ecology of love with respect to activism, listen to this regarding the self-view involved in activism, self-views possibly involved in our activism or in our non-activism.

This is Wendell Berry, the poet: "A protest that endures, I think, is moved by a hope more modest than that of public success—namely, the hope of preserving qualities in one's heart that would be destroyed by acquiescence."

In a way, he's turning on its head how we sometimes think of activism. It's not so much about achieving this or that in the world, he's saying, but the hope of preserving qualities in one's heart that would be destroyed by acquiescence. Something is holy here in my heart, and I'm going to act and speak and stand up in a certain way because that is holy, and I cannot bear to think of those qualities being destroyed. There's beauty and divinity in those qualities in the self, in the heart. There's some orientation towards leaning, towards emphasizing the self, of the view of the self, and of what's in the self.

Confucius, obviously many centuries before, but in a way elaborating on something, pulling that out a bit more. This is what Confucius said or wrote: "You follow your conscience not in order to change the world,

but in order to be a noble person. You are prepared to go against all norms, conventions, dictates and decrees, even to risk your life in order to remain true to yourself."

Beautiful, strong words. And again, not to change the world, this following of our conscience, but in order to be a noble person.

Now we can talk about self and all this—what both Wendell Berry and Confucius write—in terms of qualities of heart, in Wendell Berry's phrase, which would be a traditionally Dharma way of speaking about things, in terms of qualities of citta, qualities of heart. That's possible and helpful, definitely. But when we start talking about things like nobility—which, by the way, is also a word the Buddha emphasized a lot—nobility as a word, as a concept, already draws in, it can't help but draw in, image and fantasy. There's a kind of logos with nobility of what that means, but specifically what I want to say is image and fantasy of self.

What resonance do these words have in us? Nobility, or what Wendell Berry said, or Confucius—the resonances are caused by our soul aspects, soul resonances of the psyche through image and fantasy. The very idea of nobility gets seen through image and fantasy, and that colors the image and fantasy of the self.

This is something I've talked about in other talks. I actually don't want to dwell on it in this talk, but in other talks I talked about how very easily, without realizing it, the image or the fantasy or the archetype of the self gets limited in different ways and for different reasons, and sometimes limited through different cultures, whether that's Dharma culture or other culture. So that certain images of the self, if you like, are not allowed into the sense of the self, into the view of the self—the warrior, the revolutionary, rage as a force empowering the self, giving power to the self's actions. These are all put aside or ignored or somehow not okay. Many others we could mention as well.

Because what often has become dominant is an image or a fantasy or an archetype of the practitioner or the self or of the awakened person as equanimous, cooled—to borrow the Buddha's words, nibbāna is related to cooled—equanimous, cooled, not engaged. And there's an archetypal image operating that does not allow other archetypal images of the self and the practitioner and the person walking the path and the awakened person. There's a constraining on the image there.

Luc Jacquet is a filmmaker. He made, you may know, *The March of the Penguins*, which got an Oscar. And then, I haven't seen this film, but he recently made another film called *Ice and Sky*, and it's about climate change. This Luc Jacquet spoke in an interview of the moral compulsion he felt to address climate change caused by humans. To not do so, he said, would be criminal.

It was a strong word, criminal. He goes on: "I could make endless contemplative films about the beauty of nature, but it would not have been right to do so. We have to deal with this. It's our duty. It's like the war. You want a quiet life with your family, but you have to say, I cannot accept this. You have to get out of a

comfortable area and into the political. You must participate in the society in which you live."

Again, strong words. But can you hear wrapped up in these words this sense of an imaginal fantasy sense of the self and, if you like, the duty of the self? That word "duty" is also a word that can be imbued with the imaginal. There's a self-view and archetype wrapped up in what he's saying, and then this sense of duty to that.

When we dare to experiment with and practice with and open up to different self-views and more archetypally imbued views of the self, play with all that and open it up and allow it and allow its force and its current into our life and into the way we sense ourselves, then we can feel, very often, a duty to these imaginal figures that come through. They demand something.

This is something I've talked about before, but just to mention it. It's interesting sometimes when there is a sense of duty to an archetypal image or an imaginal figure that has an archetypal quality to it for us—that can bring a lot of activation in the being.

Someone was telling me they were about to engage in an act of civil disobedience in relation to climate, and she was saying, "Gosh, the adrenaline beforehand, and the anxiety." She had just assumed, of course—very natural or normal, given the culture—assumed that the anxiety was in relation to the possible consequences: "I may go to jail, I may face all kinds of repercussions." And of course, some of it is to do with that.

But there's also another aspect that's more to do with the imaginal and the soul dimension of what's going on. When we feel a duty to an imaginal figure that has an archetypal value for us, when we allow that to fill the self and we feel a duty in our life to that image, the sense of that—because of the other-dimensionality of it and the hugeness of it and the divinity of it and the sense of the human being having to hold and carry and let that flow through—in itself causes a lot of adrenaline. There's tremendous energy and this sense of duty wrapped up in that. It's not just the adrenaline about the fear of possible consequences.

That was a little bit of an aside. The point is that self too—the sense of self, the view of self—is also given verticality through the imaginal and through fantasy. It's ensouled, if you like. And potentially, in this eros-psyche-logos dynamic that we're talking about, the view and the image of self is also endless in its potentiality. It can be forever opening. There's not a limit there to how we can see the self.

Some self-views I've already alluded to will block engagement. For example, the archetypal view of the equanimous one, the cool one who's not engaged that way. But also other ones, less obvious.

I know several people who, although they don't actually think at all—imagine that's part of the problem—are kind of enthused by or enthralled by or live their life by the archetypal image of what you might call the simple man, or the simple man of nature, or nature man, or something like that: living close to nature in the old ways and very simple and renunciate and in touch with those elements and seeing

oneself in a certain way.

But often, at least in the couple of people I'm now thinking of, wrapped up in that image is actually the logos—the limited logos of physicalism, of this one-dimensionality. And somehow it doesn't translate in terms of engagement. With regard to the natural world, one person I think of engages a lot with some other issues, but not in relation to the natural world. Interesting.

So what one would think of as, "Well, that kind of person is obviously going to be an environmentalist and obviously going to be engaged in environmentalism"—actually, no, not necessarily. And it may be partly because wrapped up in that for them is this one-dimensional view of physicalism. Maybe.

So where there is metta, if we go back to this metta and eros, where there's metta, the views of the self tend towards dissolution—tends towards a sense, as the metta deepens, of dissolving the self in union, in oneness. It's the way the self-sense transforms as, or at the times of, strong metta and deep metta. The self-sense basically dissolves or dissolves in oneness, dissolves in the sense of universal love that we're talking about. There are other ways of it dissolving through other practices—dissolving awareness, all kinds of approaches.

But in other words, one way that the views of the self can be wrapped up in this sense of other dimensions is through a sense of dissolving of the self into some kind of oneness, a non-fabricating of the self-sense at any time.

Versus in the erotic kind of love, when there's eros, the archetypal views, the imaginal views, the fantasy of the self, get actually heightened.

So the view of self, again, is infused, impregnated with the imaginal, complicated, enriched with the imaginal. And the sense of other dimensions of the self, in this case, and the sacredness is heightened through the particular and through the personhood and the personal.

So one dissolves self, the way of metta, and the eros actually does not dissolve self—it complicates it, enriches it, and retains the particularity and the personhood. And the sacredness is through and in the particularity and the personhood, not the universality.

In regard to activism, there is also the involvement of the view of what Dharma is. The conceptual structure or limits or framework of what the Dharma is, and our imaginal sense, our fantasy of what the Dharma is—these two always go together. Logos and image, concept and fantasy concept. So our view of the Dharma also has a big impact on whether we engage, how we engage, what our activism looks like, or whether it exists at all.

One way is in relation to our belief of what the Dharma says about self, relating to what we just explored about self-view. Some people nowadays, in what has become quite popular, hold onto the view that the dharma teaching is always toward not-self, always in regard to there being no self, or that self is

something to be let go of, not engaged. Or, for instance, that what the dharma teaches is that the self is just a process, and the more you can see self that way, the better—trying to see self that way as the dharma perspective to hold onto.

But actually, if we have an understanding of a much more radical level of the emptiness of the self, and of all things really—not just saying self is a process, but saying something much, much deeper than that in terms of what it means to say the self is empty, radically empty. Radical from the Latin word radix, to the root. There's no root to the self. It's completely and thoroughly, utterly empty. All the elements of it, all of it, all that process is empty. Process does not ultimately exist.

Knowing that fullness and radical depth of the emptiness of self actually allows us, seemingly paradoxically, to come back and play with all kinds of views, fantasies and images of self, knowing that they're empty. I can play with the image of the Dharma practitioner as revolutionary, as troublemaker, as warrior—all these other archetypal, imaginal senses or views that get shunted aside or disallowed often in certain Dharma spheres. So that's one way.

A second way that the view of the Dharma—the concept and image of the Dharma—can constrain activism is in regard to our conception of the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause for suffering, the possibility of ending suffering, and the path to the ending of that suffering.

There are two ways here in regard to the Four Noble Truths. The first is simpler, in a way, and it has to do with whether I view it purely individually and internally. Do I conceive the Four Noble Truths teaching as only applying to my personal suffering? Or do I allow it to include the suffering of other humans and animals and the suffering caused—second noble truth—by institutions and ideologies and systems, economic or otherwise political, and views that pervade our society and our culture that basically cause suffering? Am I allowing my idea of the Four Noble Truths, and thus of the Dharma, to actually open up to include all that?

I think slowly, and I hope increasingly, more so-called Buddhists are opening up that view. And for some people, it's a kind of no-brainer. How could you not? How can you exclude all that and talk about suffering and then not talk about these crazy tragedies of institutions and systems and ideologies that cause so much suffering that's so entrenched in our society? A lot of people have said it's ridiculous to conceive of a Dharma and the ethics of the Dharma that doesn't include all that.

I heard one teacher, when asked about this, say that climate change doesn't concern the Dharma at all—it's not involved. Someone might hear that and just say, "How completely ridiculous. You're making the Dharma irrelevant to modern life." But if there's this opening up of the range of what's included in the Four Noble Truths and what it applies to, then out of that there will be care for the earth, just because one is moving in a direction of minimizing suffering—wherever that suffering occurs and wherever that suffering has its origins, whether in my mind or in institutions or systems or ideologies, conceptions, assumptions, political systems, whatever. So that's one way the conception of the Four Noble Truths can

limit or open.

Another way is deeper, in a way, because there's often what we might call a kind of cognitive dissonance in Dharma practitioners. Very, very common—I run into it all the time. It's almost like one hears the Four Noble Truths, one hears these teachings about letting go and non-clinging, and the centrality of letting go of clinging. In the Four Noble Truths, clinging causes suffering, letting go of clinging brings freedom—that's the nutshell version of the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are central to what the Dharma is, especially in insight meditation circles.

And so a person actually, either consciously or kind of by default, is somehow engaged in trying to live a life of non-clinging. Trying to live a life of non-clinging becomes somehow an ideal. And of course, it's impossible. Even the idea—if you actually reflect on what that would look like or what that would mean—involves itself in all kinds of sillinesses and contradictions. It's just not possible.

If I really go into what that means and what it would look like, it's a bit of a ridiculous notion. And yet somehow it's held up, and then I fail, and yet somehow it doesn't get questioned as an ideal. Maybe a little bit, we play with words like clinging and craving, and sort of tease them both—craving's okay because it's momentary, but clinging is not, you know, and that kind of thing. But there's still something that doesn't really work and makes sense in that as a life, especially in a life if one wants to include eros, and one wants to include other aspects of life, relationship, and love of one's children, and love of nature and all. It just doesn't work as an ideology.

Implicit there in the understanding of the Four Noble Truths is this non-clinging, and there may be a goal—if one even talks about goals, and some people hate that word—but the goal is of less stress or less depression if you're in the kind of mindfulness modalities, and that's kind of the goal, although one's very careful with words like "goal." Or it might be that implicit in that understanding of Four Noble Truths is the kind of ideal of being present to life, being present to life—I'm going to give that all kinds of different language—but the whole thing there, the kind of aspiration of trying to live a life of non-clinging, of being present, or whatever it is.

All of that is taking place in a world of unquestioned reality. The world is just what it seems. We acknowledge, of course, that things are impermanent, that we may not like that. We acknowledge the interconnectedness and can kind of see that more. But basically, the world, in that kind of... the narrowness, really, of that conception, the world is... Practice is taking place with a backdrop or in the context of a world that's basically what it seems to be to the dominant worldview, the dominant modernist worldview, the Weltanschauung. Basically, it is that. Yes, impermanent. Yes, interconnected, etc. But basically, it's that.

So that's a very, very common way, or even if a person doesn't really think of Four Noble Truths and all that, it's somehow wrapped up in all that, is this kind of ideology, really, without maybe even a person thinking it's an ideology. It's a conception of what the Dharma is, what the Four Noble Truths is, and what

they're for, and where they move to.

Now compare that with a different conception that really picks up this piece of non-clinging, or letting go of clinging, that's there implicit in the Four Noble Truths very strongly, very centrally. It picks it up and really starts practicing with, meditatively, in all kinds of ways, at all kinds of depths and subtleties and all kinds of directions, but to a lesser or greater degree at any moment in time, practices letting go of clinging to different degrees and at different depths and at different ranges of subtlety for a period of time and then letting clinging come back and just exploring this movement of more or less clinging into greater and greater depths of non-clinging, and greater and greater subtleties of what that even means to cling.

So the practice becomes a kind of meditative exploration of sliding up and down deliberately this spectrum, if you like, of how much clinging there is. I realize for some of you this is going to sound really, really strange, and I've filled this out elsewhere, so I'm not going to elaborate too much. But just to say, if one practices that way and views practice that way, then it opens a completely different door.

One starts to see that as one lets go of clinging, or in the moment when one meditatively lets go of clinging more and more deeply, the perception of things, self, other, world is fabricated less. To the degree that there's clinging in any moment of perception, there's more fabrication. To the degree that there's less clinging in any moment, there's less fabrication. So I see this relationship between clinging and the experience of self and things and objects and world.

And the exploration of letting go of clinging to different degrees at different times, not as something to hang on to—I'm not trying to continuously non-cling somehow in regard to everything. But this more meditative, nuanced, subtle and much deeper movement of exploration in the direction of non-clinging and more clinging and non-clinging and different kinds of less clinging, one sees the intimate connection, the dependent co-arising of perception and clinging. The fabrication of perception means the fabrication of experience and appearance with clinging.

One starts to see, oh, perception is fabricated, and oh, it's fabricated to a much greater, more pervasive and deeper extent than I thought. My sense of things, I begin to understand they are empty. I perceive them this way when I look in this way, when there's this kind of clinging. I perceive them that way when there's this very, very subtle kind of clinging. I perceive them this way when there's nothing left but just this subtlest clinging. What's the real way? They're empty. Things appear dependent on the way of looking, and central in that is dependent on the degree, if you like, and the kind of clinging that's there.

This way of understanding emptiness is actually just a kind of key to the exploration of the fabrication of perception, and from that, our sense and our understanding of what things are, self, other, world. And the sense of the world then begins to open. It's empty. World, nature, is empty of inherent existence. My perception, my sense of it depends, depends on clinging, depends on the way of looking, depends on how I'm looking. And it becomes more open because it's empty. It can be seen this way and that way. All kinds of possibilities of perceiving nature, perceiving world, open up for us through this practice and through

actually the exploration of this sort of sliding scale of subtleties and depths of clinging in any moment.

So the whole thing is actually oriented in terms of understanding experience, understanding perception, and what that does is it opens up this understanding of emptiness, which opens up the very possibilities of perception of what self, other, and world or nature is, are. That becomes much more open, an open playing field, really.

So that's one consequence. The second consequence implicit in all that is clinging is not an enemy. It's actually possible at times. And of course, I mean, just think about it.

Just feel into your life. Of course you need to cling. One of my teachers used to say, "You know, you need to cling to ethics for a while, at least. You need to cling to certain levels of understanding in order to open to others. You need to cling to cultivating good qualities in order to give practice a possibility even of this kind of depth and power." All kinds of things you need to cling to, just within the Dharma. And then you think about other aspects of one's life.

So can we view the Dharma in a way that actually, strangely, opens up the validity and possibility and legitimacy of clinging at times? And also opens up a place for eros? Rather than the suspicion of eros and either denigration or just ignoring of the erotic and the sexual, actually has a place, has a place, because I'm approaching the Dharma, conceiving it in a very different way.

So in this way then, the Four Noble Truths and the teaching about letting go of clinging, the teaching about letting go of stress, is not so that we can be free—whatever that might mean—but so that we can see more. It's not so that we can be free; it's so that we can see more, sense more emptiness, know more emptiness of everything. We can see more levels in the perception, if you like, dimensions. We can see more sacredness. There is an openness and an opening of the perception through this way of approaching practice.

To me, there's a much greater freedom there, a whole other level of freedom. It's a much more open, a much richer way of viewing the Dharma.

But in a way, this talk today—I just mention these things—but this talk today is really focused on not so much the self-view, as I've talked about that, not so much the view of the Dharma, and the way the view of the self and the view of the Dharma are involved in all this business about eros and psyche and the dynamic there. But actually, primarily for today, is the view of another, or any other, and particularly of nature and earth, as we started off with.

So just to return a little bit to this—we've said already quite a lot about it—in the so-called Enlightenment in Western civilization. I mean, it was a gradual thing, you know, like these things are. Seventeenth century, sort of. And the scientific revolution, which happened at the same time—these things were interpenetrated. The scientific revolution, Enlightenment.

There was a philosopher or scientist or both, or writer, Francis Bacon, very influential in the scientific revolution. And that whole movement, that whole revolution that came with the scientific revolution and with the Enlightenment, brought about, as I alluded to earlier, this kind of one-dimensionality. It's like the shaving off of the sense of verticality, of multiplicity of dimensions in our perception, our sense, our view of things.

So this is—you cannot overestimate the significance and the consequences of this. All kinds of wonderful consequences and really helpful, of course. But like all things, bring with it a shadow, a blind spot, a constriction.

So the philosopher Owen Barfield has written about this quite a lot. And I think it's from an essay called "The Rediscovery of Meaning." But he talks about, he makes a distinction between scientific method, because that's what really started back then with Galileo and others. It's really an introduction of a kind of a way of observing nature.

So Owen Barfield points out, quoting him a little bit, that meticulously observing the facts of nature and systematically interpreting them in terms of physical cause and effect—so in other words, this one-dimensionality is only interpreting things in terms of physical cause and effect—that was introduced as a method, brilliant and revolutionary and important as it is, but it grew as a method and grew in a way that at some point, almost—well, in many cases unconsciously, but in other cases more deliberately—became a sort of entrenched belief and assumption, dominating the culture, pervasive in the culture, the belief and assumption of physicalism or materialism, using those words interchangeably, and sometimes was kind of enshrined as a philosophy with positivism, if you know a little bit about this.

So something that started as a method became a belief and assumption that actually that method of interpreting the facts of nature, purely interpreting them only in terms of physical cause and effect, was not only just a useful way of doing things, but actually the only possible one and the only legitimate one. So it became a belief and something of a sort of entrenched and often hidden dogma that pervades our culture and the culture and the view of modernism. It's an assumption shared by most people in the culture and it's become the dominant cultural view of matter and therefore of nature.

On top of all that, Barfield points out that people believe that that view itself is a scientifically established fact. In other words, the view that the only possible way of looking at things is the scientific one is itself scientifically proven. A, it's not, and B, just logically it's impossible. It's outside of the loop or the system of the relevant terms of the logic involved there.

Something has happened culturally. What started as a method became a predilection, an emphasis on that method, and then that became a view of what was legitimate, and that became entrenched as a belief, an assumption shared in the culture, and then it was even believed that that that was itself established by science somehow. And science being the only legitimate way of establishing anything.

And in and through all that, culturally then, has there been a dying away, a starving, if you like, of our ability to perceive, if you like, these other dimensions? Yes. So all that affects how we sense things, not just the ideas.

Now, I'm not talking about intellectuality, but about ideas—sorry, about the sense, the very experience of nature. Culturally, has it become rare? I don't know—this sense of the other dimensions of things, this sense that things are more than just matter.

So the other extreme, which I think we mentioned before, is a divinity, a sense of divinity that's cut off from materiality in the world—and perhaps that was dominant before the scientific revolution. Divinity is just something transcendent, and materiality is something separate. The world is separate from God. That would be another extreme view. There's a verticality there, but no connection between the dimensions of the vertical, on the vertical spectrum. And it's dualistic.

So one of the things about eros is that it connects horizontally. It connects me to this other that I love, that there's an erotic connection with. But it connects vertically as well. It connects the dimensions so there isn't this dualism or split or divinity cut off. It connects the dimensions through this *eros-psyche-logos*, because it's wrapped up in perception and ideation and the sense of things, infusing our very sense of things, our very image and perception of things. So it connects horizontally—eros helps to connect horizontally and also vertically, connects these dimensions of perception. And it does it, as we said, in and through the particulars.

So *mettā* also connects dimensions, but it does it through universality. And so it's infinite, if you like, in a different way. As I said, it tends to fabricate less, and through fabricating less, gradually, gradually, as you get deeper, there's a sense of this infinity of love. And then, as I said, some people are able to take that further, if they know how, if they're taught how, into the unfabricated. But there aren't the infinite varieties of perception possible that come through the erotic kind of love, the erotic strand of things with this mutual impregnation and insemination of the eros and psyche.

There's something else relevant here about Francis Bacon, the scientific revolution and all that. Francis Bacon wrote about knowledge. One of the things he wrote about was knowledge. And he made a very strong and actually extremely influential statement that became very influential and had significant consequences over the centuries.

Knowledge, in his exposition, knowledge was valued for its instrumentality. In other words, for its practicality in re-engineering nature and in giving humanity power over the elements of nature. So for him, if knowledge wasn't instrumental and practical in that sense of the way we can dominate and reconfigure nature and use it for our ends, it wasn't a worthwhile knowledge. It wasn't even knowledge at all in his book. So he wrote, knowledge without such practical applications is worthless or worth less.

And something else to point out here, because knowledge was also wrapped up with measurement. In

other words, in his view, if you couldn't measure something, it wasn't really real. Only what was measurable was real. That was absolutely integral and fundamental to the ideology of the scientific revolution. Only what was measurable was real.

So that began very much to spread its influence in our very sense of what the cosmos and nature was made of. It's only made of stuff that's measurable. And anything you talk about that can't be measured cannot be real and cannot be really what the cosmos and nature and earth is made of. Massively influential. It sounds like intellectual ideas, but they so infuse our ways of thinking and our sense, our perception of things, of others, of nature, of the world, and a sense of what's real, pervading the culture.

Now, measurement and instrumentality are actually inevitably tied together. I don't know if that's obvious. But if you want to see, is this instrumental, can I be able to do something, I need to measure whether it's doing what it's doing and how much it's doing and what I want it to be doing. Measurement—and whether I do that with a slide rule or a microscope or some kind of calibrated measure where they just look at it and say, yeah, that looks pretty good, that one does better than this—measurement and instrumentality are inevitably tied together.

Now all this, I'm going on about it, not just because of the views that come of it, but also in relation to activism. So understandably and importantly, how often in relation to our activism we want to measure the effectiveness of our activism. And in other words, we want to measure its instrumentality. Is what I'm doing ultimately affecting, say, a government so that ultimately, for instance, the measurement of CO2 parts per million in the atmosphere is reduced or limited or stabilized? So we want to measure the effectiveness, the instrumentality of our activism, directly or indirectly. And of course that's so important and so needs to be there as an element of what's going on.

But can there be sometimes an over-emphasis on the instrumentality of our activism?

So of course these questions—what will be effective, what will affect a change in society, in politics, in the natural world? And how can I measure it? How do I measure whether what I'm doing as an activist is helping?—are really, really important.

But if I exclusively focus on instrumentality or overemphasize it, might that very overemphasis actually, strangely enough, reflect and be a symptom of the kind of one-dimensional view, the physicalism, the lack of other dimensionalities, the lack of verticality that's pervasive in the culture? That started with the scientific revolution and had such—as well as so much good that's come out of it—such dire consequences? And the lack also of soulfulness and eros that came, or that grew out of the kind of Western Enlightenment, the scientific revolution ideology when it became entrenched as a kind of limiting belief, dogma. And then the whole view of modernism that in so many ways constrains the possibilities for soulfulness and eros.

So sometimes, understandably, we can overemphasize or exclusively emphasize the instrumentality of

our activism. Obviously, it's important. But again, asking, is it enough? Is it enough for the psyche? And is it enough for the whole complexity of the situation of climate change and environmental crisis? The multi-leveled nature of that complexity of those crises?

Looking more specifically at how this applies to activism itself—it's kind of obvious, but it's worth saying, I think. Human activity is part of ecology, but human activism is also, as a human activity, part of ecology. So for better or worse, human activity and activism are part of the ecology of the whole planet, of the Earth. You can't remove a study of human activism and activity from the study of ecology. It's all, of course, integral.

But the point I want to make within that is really about styles or thrusts or levels of activism. We can talk about the instrumental level, if you like, the practical or the effectual, and the emphasis on that as a kind of style or thrust or emphasis, a level of activism. We can also talk about what we might call the soulful or the spiritual or the imaginal, symbolic styles, thrusts, levels of activism.

And this is not either-or. There's an "and" here. I think it's really important to include both, or to allow within the spectrum and the range of activism more widely—whether it's you as an individual, me as an individual—but allow and recognize this: they both need to be included, that whole range needs to be included. They're not even actually totally separate; you can't really separate them.

We all have both of those levels of our being, if you like. Of course, we're concerned with practicalities and effects and instrumentality, but we also have a level of our being that is concerned with soul and with image and spirit.

Why do we have funeral services and memorials for people who die? Practically, I mean, you might say, well, it's hygienic—just stick them in the ground or burn them so it doesn't rot and smell and infect. Stick the body, do that to the body. That's purely instrumental. But something else—we need something else. Why bother to have a memorial service? Something the soul needs it. The funeral service. The soul needs the image and the fantasy. Something in us needs that level of engagement, of activity, in relation, in this case, to a death. It's not practical. It's for the soul.

Or, I heard this story about when the Titanic was sinking. I never saw that film, by the way—Leonardo DiCaprio and... I don't know who else, never saw it. But I heard that in reality what happened was the ship was sinking and there weren't enough lifeboats or enough space in the lifeboats for everyone. So certain people got into lifeboats and got away and a lot of people didn't. And those people who were left on the ship as it was sinking, knowing that they were going to die soon, knowing that the ship was going down, they began singing hymns, hymns to God.

And you think, well, what's the point? What does that do? It doesn't do anything.

It doesn't help the ship not sink. There's no practical efficacy. It's for the soul.

And this is a dimension that emerges when we consider climate change and the massive challenges and possible devastation we face as a species, when we witness the tragedy befalling other species on Earth and feel the horror and sadness that can arise. People often ask me, "What can I do?" Or they say, "I don't think we're going to turn this around." And that may be true.

In a way, holding and allowing that very real possibility—whatever that means, because it's not black and white, is it? It's not simply destruction or no destruction. There's already a certain amount of destruction. But holding that possibility of failure—if you like, failure of activism, of having gone beyond tipping points and edges, of the kind of collapses of ecosystems and civilizations that might ensue—holding that as a possibility, not saying it will happen or won't happen, but acknowledging it might happen.

And then what happens with that? Do I give up activism or regard it all as futile, or become bitter about the whole thing? Or like those people on the Titanic, is there a soul level that needs to be incorporated, brought in, included, activated, brought alive in relation to that side of the possibility of activism?

And of course, we need to ensoul the more hopeful and positive side as well, because we can make a difference, and we are making a difference. But between these two—the instrumental, the practical, the effectual, and the soulful, imaginal—different personalities seem to incline toward one or the other. It's interesting how I meet different people with these varying preferences.

Different situations or predicaments need an emphasis on one or the other, the instrumental or the soulful. I would say the totality and complexity of what climate change is, and the environmental crises, and the complexity of the underlying matrix of its causes and conditions—it demands of us both levels of activism. That would be my view.

I've said this before, but I'll say it again: I feel very strongly, and have for years now, that there's such complexity to the psychology involved in climate change—involved in people's reactions to climate change, their engagement or non-engagement, activism or non-activism, and what causes climate change or allows it in the first place. Such complexity of psychology underlies all that plurality. There's not one approach or one thing or one realization or one change that's going to address all the different kinds of psychology operating in different people, or that dominate in different people, or even the various psychological patterns that circulate within one person.

Recognizing this complexity of the psychology involved calls for different approaches, different directions of entry, different levels of conversation, and different tones as well. That's something I've been interested in doing in just a very small way over the years—approaching it each time from a different direction with a different flavor and tone and level and aspect to the whole conversation. Because the psychology is so complex, no one thing is going to convince everyone.

When we think about what makes climate change such a seemingly intractable issue for us as human beings—seemingly so unsexy and uncaptivating, so hard for most people to really get to grips with or

address or engage with—partly it's because it's not acute. It's a chronic issue, a long-term issue with effects extending far beyond our lifetime. Human beings are generally better with acute things. We prefer acute things.

If you're a helper or carer, we prefer someone to have an acute illness. Chronic illness is difficult—difficult to sustain, certainly for the patient, but also for the carers or people around who care. It's difficult to sustain interest. Acute is dramatic; you can get in there and do your helping thing and feel good about it, and then it's over and you feel good about that. Chronic is hard to sustain. Ken Wilber, in his book *Grace and Grit*—I read it years ago—I think makes this point: it's hard for us to sustain interest in chronic illness unless it's ours. Even then, it's sometimes hard to relate to it.

So that's an aspect of the environmental crisis and climate change that makes it difficult to relate to, that makes the psychology difficult. Another aspect is that there's not the same gratification you might get in engaging or helping in other ways. Engaging in action around climate change—for the most part, you're not going to encounter lots of grateful faces after you've done your thing, and experience the gratification of that, because it's a long haul, and sometimes you're not even dealing with people so much. There isn't that gratification we get back from others' gratitude.

Or the gratification of, say, being with someone dying in a hospice—the sense of how beautiful that can be, how poignant, and in a strange way, gratifying. There's beauty in that letting go, in the death and the grace that can be there. There's a kind of gratification and beauty in that, and somehow even that's not present in relation to climate change and environmental degradation.

There is a place for bringing these things in and allowing them and finding them, but often they just can't be there by the nature of what we're dealing with and its trajectories in time and where it affects the earth and people.

The results, like the causes and conditions that give rise to climate change, are equally diffuse. Both the results of environmental crises and climate change themselves, and the results of our activism, are scattered and hard to grasp. It's difficult to see them clearly, to concretize and capture them. They're complex. You cannot think so simplistically in terms of monistic cause and monistic effect—this cause producing that effect.

Given all that and much more we could say about what's difficult and complex about something like climate change, how then can we proceed? Given those difficulties, those challenges, and the complexity, how can we open up the relationship and the view—the way we're seeing it all? Both the crisis itself and our activism—how can we open all that up, the relationship, the view, the way of seeing, in a way that will be helpful?

So this last point, to sum up in relation to this ecology of love, or perhaps just to leave you with some thoughts:

Do we love the earth? Do we love nature deeply? When we do, do we love it and nature deeply because we sense it as sacred? When there's a sense of sacredness, there is implicitly and automatically and organically a love, a deepening of the love. Do we love the earth and nature deeply because we sense it as sacred?

Or is it that in loving it—whether that's through mettā or through eros, but particularly now, emphasizing eros in this talk—that in loving it, we open up perception to what I'm calling other dimensions, this verticality, vertical dimensions, levels? Perception is opened up through the imaginal, through fantasy, through fabrication involving psyche and logos, as we said. This opens it up until eventually it is opened to a sense of the sacred, and then more and more to different kinds of sacred.

So do we love nature because we sense it as sacred, or in loving it does it become sacred? Do we discover its sacredness and give it its sacredness? Or both? Obviously, I would say both.

This is the ecology of love. This opening up of perception, of the levels of perception, the enrichment of the sense of what it is that we love, creates more love. And the love opens up the richness of perception. The mettā and the eros do that in different ways. They open up different dimensions in different ways from each other.

And then in turn, in this ecology of love, the different dimensions, the perception, the experience, the sense of the different dimensions—the different richnesses and levels of what it is that I love, in this case, the earth—those perceptions feed back to the mettā and the eros. When I see, experience this thing differently because of the mettā, it feeds the mettā. Or because of the eros, it feeds the eros. And so the whole thing can organically grow, as we've talked about.

So self, other, world, eros or love, sense of the sacred or sense of the profane—all of that is co-constellated, co-fabricated. And it can be skillfully fabricated, if we use Buddhist terminology. The ways we see and experience self, other, world, nature, love, sacredness—we can fabricate that in skillful ways, and there's no end to that. Deeper and deeper, more and more beautiful, more and more soul, soul-making, soul-enriching.

And knowing the emptiness of all things actually allows that more, allows that play with fabrication, legitimizes it, gives it room—part of the logos, the larger logos there that allows.

So then in all that, in the skillful fabrication, other dimensions of the object—in this case, of nature—come into perception. And that allows other dimensions to our love and therefore to the fruits of that love in action, in our action and engagement, the possibilities of engagement. Opening up, opening up.

So I'm really interested here in opening up possibilities—possibilities of perception, of experience, of knowing, possibilities of love, and possibilities of engagement. All of this is tied together.

What does it need for that not to get locked down, limited, constrained, fixated? What does it need so that

it can keep growing into more and more beauty, more and more depth, more and more richness, more and more soulfulness, more and more love and action?

This is, for me, why all of this is important. Why all of this is important for the soul, and it's important for the earth.

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