From Inertia, Towards the Solutio (A Fragment)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 7:44

As we move forward in the retreat, the encouragement is to open up a little bit more, as Catherine was saying. We began by emphasizing the energy body—be here, become really wedded to or inhabiting the energy body. This will always remain a part of the meditation, always a fundamental aspect of experience that we're endeavoring to incorporate, always maintaining sensitivity to and involving the energy body.

But now the encouragement is to open up the senses and allow, or even gently encourage and play with, this poetry of perception, this art of perception—a cosmopoiesis, or in the plural, cosmopoieses. In other words, different ways of sensing this world around us.

This obviously spills over into the other postures, especially walking outside. That's a place that offers much availability to this kind of practice—walking on the lawn, going for a walk, standing and moving as we've discussed.

One way of understanding something fundamental about human nature is recognizing that we are habitual creatures. The mind is, from a certain perspective, a mechanism of habit, a creature of habit. This means the ways we tend to think, conceive—even below the level of thinking—and the ways we see, sense, and perceive are often quite habitual. We just tend to see the world in a certain way, tend to see myself in a certain way, tend to see others in certain ways. And they repeat. There's a kind of inertia that goes with being a human being.

How do we soften this inertia? How do we loosen things up? We were talking some days ago about how much of this practice is about loosening—loosening up so that other ways of seeing, other ways of knowing become available to the soul and to the heart.

It's interesting: one aspect of allowing ourselves to perceive differently, or supporting a different kind of perception, is a kind of softening. In our habits of mind, we can look in certain ways or hear in certain ways, and something in the mind automatically rigidifies around a way that we already know how to see, how to hear, how to smell. This fabricates what we see, what we hear, what we smell. It's this—this is its reality. We don't even think this consciously.

Sometimes what supports the cosmic poise is something softening—something softening in the gaze, in the attitude, in the heart, in the being. It's just a little bit of softening that allows more of this liquidity, the alchemical solutio, and that allows the more creative seeing, the malleability of the seeing.

So if you're going to do walking meditation during the day or standing meditation, we're not forcing anything, but opening up to the possibility. What is it to walk, as Catherine was talking about, with this

different awareness of the elements and the sacredness of the elements? What would it mean to walk in a sacred landscape? To walk prayerfully in a sacred landscape?

What does that mean? It can mean lots of things. What does this word "prayer" mean? We've talked about that. Prayerfully—what does that mean? How does that affect the body? We've discussed these hand postures or movements, or allowing your body to move in a certain way. Some things—just like when we were chanting out loud—it's as if the whole body is involved. The whole being can be involved.

What is it to walk prayerfully in a sacred landscape? You don't have to force that. It's more that we're trying not to prevent it, so that there can be this liquidity of perception.

Minds are inertial. They're not locked, but there's an inertia there. And sometimes bodies are inertial too. We get used to sitting with our eyes closed, sitting in a certain posture and keeping it still—and that's great, it's a great discipline. But then there's a kind of thinking: "Well, if I do this movement business that we were talking about, I'll be a bit self-conscious because that's not really the culture here." So there's an inertia that comes from being self-conscious. That's a part that we might need to pay attention to.

What we're doing is recognizing that we're often locked in—as I said—to thinking, to ways of relating, to ways of perceiving. Most of the time we don't actually realize what we're locked into. So a lot of what we're doing is loosening, allowing that loosening to happen. Sometimes only after something has loosened do you realize that you were locked into something.

A big part of what we're doing is loosening, allowing that loosening to happen. And then there can be the shaping, the sculpting, the creativity.

So allowing it to expand, allowing it to be liquid, allowing it to spill out into the world without forcing, but opening up a space where that can be possible.

And when it is, it's almost like, let's say you're walking and there's a sense, some kind of sense of sacredness or cosmopoiesis, something like that. That becomes the meditation. It might be through the soles of my feet, it hopefully will involve the whole body, but the thing that I'm concentrating on is the cosmopoiesis. That becomes what I'm tuning to. It's a dimension of experience that one is then looking to engage and relate to and linger with. Tune to.

No forcing. Allowing things to loosen so that things can be born for us and then gently encouraged, supported.

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