# The Imaginal and the Middle Way (Q & A)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 51:14

So again, just a reminder, we're recording the Q&As. But if you're not comfortable with having your question recorded, just say that, and we can pause it. No problem. Anyone, please?

*Andrea:** I have a question following on from what Lawrence said in the last session, which was more of a doubt of the process of the imaginal for him as a person, but this is more of a fear, really, about returning to the context of home. Particularly as it relates to here seeing your own divinity with so much permission and so much love and support. And it's been hard, even then, at times. So to return to a place that just feels in many ways that it doesn't support this kind of work. How can we take courage and continue?

Can everyone hear that? Hopefully we'll speak to that in the closing day. But the culture does not support that. In fact, the culture probably thinks it's unhealthy and mad, dangerous, et cetera. If there is something in you that feels moved, called to that vision of things, or at least moving in and out of that vision of things, then just like any practice, it needs support.

I was just reflecting a minute ago—it's pretty amazing that we can come together for less than a week and all this stuff can happen, you know, and people having experiences and understandings and connecting things and struggling with all that. Which kind of tells me it's more available. A lot of this stuff is more available than we tend to think or assume.

I think the secret being off retreat—and I will repeat this—is you need to be nourished. Now it doesn't mean 24 hours of every day, every day of the week. It means getting enough, enough input of different views. Because everywhere we look in society, this isn't the view that you're going to get. And we'll be talking about this in the talks tonight and tomorrow night. What is the cultural view of self? What does the culture do with self? We're inundated by that, surrounded by that. Ways of thinking about the self, pressures on the self. The self is this, it's not that. It's supposed to feel this way and at the same time it's contradictory—it's supposed to be doing something else.

So what's important, I think, is getting enough of another message. And that could be through reading. It could be through listening. It could be through friends who are also interested in that. And there's sharing and there's mutual back and forth and support and listening and other people's ideas.

I think we underestimate—and this goes for all kinds of practice and opening to the mystical in its whole range—it needs a lot of support. But that support doesn't need to be continuous. It just needs little openings, little injections, little short readings or whatever it is.

And that goes for practice as well. If we go back to the beginning of the retreat, when I said not

emphasizing continuity, not emphasizing focusing the mind, et cetera. What I'm emphasizing or what I'm hoping to get instead is this sense of agility. And that means in one's daily life, in the busyness, in the demands and stresses, there are little moments, little pockets in the day where it doesn't have to even be a half an hour, 45 minute hour sitting—little pockets in the day where there can be this shift of the way of looking.

And that gets more and more agile. And absolutely do not underestimate those. You think, it would be better if I could do a long retreat, it would be better. Not necessarily. Absolutely not necessarily. There can be these little moments and just become these shifts of tapping into something imaginal, cosmic oasis, whatever—divinity in this, that self. They just become much more available, much more frequently available, much more accessible. And don't believe the assumptions of the mind that think they're not. Practice. Practice.

And as I said, I emphasize the flexibility of the way of looking, the agility of the movement of the way of looking over continuity for this kind of work. And actually also for insight work as I would conceive it in terms of understanding emptiness, etc.

*[responding to a participant's question about practicing for the benefit of all beings versus divine intention]*

You can use the bodhisattva word instead if you want. Could everyone hear that? So Daya is asking about practicing for the benefit of all beings, wondering if that's different from divine intention. For me it's not—it feels complete.

First of all, it's not either-or. It's not so black and white. There's a spectrum there and we move along that spectrum. So at times, or even periods of our life, it's totally appropriate to view the practice as for myself—for my growth, for my healing and all that. And other times, it's just flipped and practice is about practicing for God. Not for the realization of God, but for God.

You could say for bodhisattva, though I'd like to nuance a little bit an alternative to what you said as well. So you could say practicing for the Buddha, or it's the Buddha practicing, or the Buddha is creating the Buddha through my practice. God is making God through my practice.

But not too quickly. The first thing is that there's a range and we may—people fall in different places. No one's forcing you to be in this place or that place on a range ever. I just want to expand the possibility of the idea that there is a spectrum here. Someone's just hearing the idea, then a person can decide where they want to be on that range.

And we move over years. It might be that a certain amount of healing is necessary, a certain amount of coalescing or consolidation of self is necessary before one can then offer that up and let that go and see the whole thing from the perspective of the divine. So that's the first thing—that's really for everyone.

But in terms of really trying to keep this word divinity open so that if that's what works for you, great. It's

interesting that I've been using—we've been using the word God and divine more on this retreat than say Buddha or Buddha nature. But you can think of them interchangeably. Even Buddha nature has a range of meanings in the different traditions, people arguing about what it means.

So it's up to you. If that's what is alive for you, then go for it. I still think there's a difference—two distinctions that may be possible just to point out. Again, not saying you have to do anything at all, we're just talking about possibilities.

One is this thing about levels and dimensions. So it could be that one is serving all beings or seeing one's practice in the service of all beings, but all beings is seen in what we're calling a kind of flat way. There's nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't have this other dimensionality, the sense of what a being is or what a human being is and what exactly I'm serving when I serve a human being. It's a bit—what I would call—modernist humanist. It's just a bit flat.

Now if that works for someone, if that's what they dedicate their life to and that's meaningful to them and that's alive to a certain extent in their soul and that's what they want, great. Absolutely wonderful. I really don't want to get into "you have to see it this way, you have to see it that way." Just in the language used, the language didn't communicate this sense of the beings. Now, it might be that that's there for you anyway.

So who is being served? What is a human being? And who is the one serving? What is involved in the serving? Or rather, what is the one serving? What is the bodhisattva made up of? What comprises a bodhisattva?

And that relates to the second thing. It's a bit like—okay, if we put it in more Buddhist terms—I might be meditating on a tantric deity, and my purpose can be to grow my qualities so that I serve all beings. And extending that a little bit, my purpose can be serving that deity. Like, my practice is doing that deity's work. It's part of that. And even—who is it really who's doing my practice? It's the deity. Who is it really who's speaking right now? It's the deity.

In some respects, these are really subtle distinctions, quibbling with words, but actually there's a range here of different dimensions or ways we're conceiving practice. So it could be the Bodhisattva, the one whose aspiration is to serve all beings. It could also be the cosmic Buddha—not a Bodhisattva, but one who has already arrived, already complete. It's already the perfect Dharmakaya manifesting in your practice, with the perfect Sambhogakaya and the perfect Nirmanakaya, the perfect manifestation.

That doesn't mean one becomes stupid and thinks everything one does is exactly appropriate and perfect, that no one can criticize. There's a kind of multi-dimensionality of the view. In this moment, as you're listening right now, this looking and listening is Samantabhadra, is the cosmic Buddha, and it's also the fumbling, foible-filled human being. Do you see? So there's this multiplicity.

What I really want to stress, personally, is that I find it troubling to be told how to view things, or to only

be allowed a certain limited view. Unfortunately, that's too common in our world, and it's even common in the Buddhist world nowadays—different sects, secular Buddhism, and all this. It's almost like: "This is the only view."

What matters to me is that there's a plurality of views, because people's souls want different things, need different things, need different views. And there are many people who are actually comfortable moving between views. So even this aspect you're asking about—you can move between different views at different times and have that spectrum of views available.

It's like, if we take the art metaphor—if I say to you that you can only have one piece of art that you get to listen to or look at, that's hard. We want choice. We want a range. We want a range of moves, a range of all kinds of possibilities. Same with views.

There's one related thing around what you mentioned—it feels like such a razor's edge between this conceiving way of looking and belief. I want that to be really clear because I don't want to go into belief territory. But this whole thing about the razor's edge was also in a talk not on this retreat, and it's really important. This has come up several times, this question about real and not real, and it's the middle way in the Dharma. That's the middle way.

Two things. One is: my experience is that what seems like this really fine tightrope walking act between reifying and dismissing, between believing and denigrating—what looks like a razor's edge, this razor-thin tightrope act—the more we either understand emptiness or liberate that artistic view I was talking about, or develop certain philosophical perspectives, that razor's edge, which appears so thin that we might fall off one side or the other, actually becomes a huge playing field. If we can find our entry into that middle way, it actually opens up all the possibilities. It doesn't feel tight at all.

All I can say is—and apparently there was one teacher who, whatever anyone asked him, would just say "more practice is required," which is a little unhelpful—but in a way, I'm partly saying that, especially about the emptiness piece. The artistic piece is something different people find their way into even before they understand the emptiness aspect. It's just a mode of being, an artistic attitude or sensibility.

But also, I would say you're going to wobble. One is going to wobble. I've said this to several people: the fact that you're asking, the fact that you're cautious, it shows the awareness, the carefulness, the care, the alertness and being on the lookout. It's a healthy doubt.

You can wobble, and you can find your balance again. And you can wobble either way—in dismissal or in over-reification. I would say, expect it to happen. Because maybe you've felt like you've done it so much before and then it was so painful, or it led to bad consequences. But this doubt, the sincerity in your question, the integrity and openness and vulnerability in your question—it will prevent it from being so extreme.

But you will wobble. You'll fall off that way and then you'll fall off this way. And this is a micro thing—it's

okay. You'll see it's not... there are micro wobbles usually, rather than this whole big lifetime plunged into the abyss of reification or whatever. Do you see?

So I hear the caution and the vulnerability and the pain there. I could of course be wrong, but my sense is it's not dangerous in the same way because of all that care. And it's almost like: don't be afraid.

As I said, it becomes not a tightrope act, actually, as you get into it. But let's use that analogy. When the tightrope walker is learning to tightrope walk, they get up on something this high, and they're falling off thousands of times. It's part of the deal. Or what's that thing about horse riding? You just have to learn to fall off? I've never actually ridden a horse. But yeah, or bike riding, or whatever it is. Part of the problem is the fear of the thing. And actually you realize these micro instances of falling one way and the other are just part of the learning.

And part of the deal.

Or... what's that thing about horse riding? It's like you just have to learn to fall off? I've never actually seen a horse. Yeah, or bike riding, or whatever it is. Part of the problem is the fear of the thing. And actually you realize these micro falling one way and the other.

And some people have a tendency to fall off more to the left, to the reification. And some people have a tendency to fall off more to the kind of nihilistic dismissal of everything. But generally, we just keep falling off.

And as we go deeper, you could say, or get more experience with all this, we get less afraid of falling off. It becomes less of a sort of big life catastrophe—you know, I'm stuck there for ten years or whatever. And we recognize it, and it's less of a big deal, and we can just find our way again.

So it's a really important question, but my sense is let yourself play. You know, children playing—they fall over, it's fine, they get up. That's the way forward.

This kind of relates to the last two questions, which is about moving back into classical meditation teachings and still wanting to engage seriously with that, and to take things like renunciation seriously. But then also recognizing that a lot of those renunciatory approaches can end up being kind of soul-shrinking rather than soul-making. I'm wondering how to balance the two.

So Andy's asking about the attraction to sort of more classical Theravadan-style Buddhism with its renunciation aspects, and how to balance that with these other things we're talking about. When you say renunciation, can you give me an example of that?

Well, I mean something like... when you talk about attitude to sexuality, for example, or to art, to aesthetic pleasure, to political engagement—it's like trying to love and care for all these things, but at the same time recognizing that they're going to be pushed aside, or you're being told, "Don't bother." And then the fear comes up: "Oh, but perhaps I am indulging too much."

Yeah. Perhaps you are. Just kidding.

One way of approaching the question is through fantasy, or through the recognition of fantasy. The renunciation is not just a good idea—it's actually alive for you as something that's attractive as a fantasy, a way of living. Do you understand? As is the artistic sensibility and the intellectual and the creative and all that.

So you have, as we've been saying several times in groups, you are a multitude. There are lots of archetypal callings pulling on your soul or inhabiting your soul. That's multiple blessings, and it ain't easy. Because sometimes they just pull in different directions. Sometimes one goes quiet for a while and one is more dominant. Sometimes they're active at the same time and it's not clear which way to go.

But one can have a life, I feel very much, where actually all of this is included. What partly allows that is sensing some of these modes—let's say the mode of renunciation—as image, as archetype, and letting that image be alive, or the artist, or whatever it is.

I think I shared in some talks, one image that's alive for me is the jazz musician. I was a jazz musician for many years, so it's alive in me. But that's an image that can live on in me and come up in all kinds of subtle ways and subtle moments without me needing to give up everything and go start practicing my instrument again and going out being a professional jazz musician. You understand? The image, fantasy, flavor of jazz music can come up with nothing to do with music. It can be there.

Also, the monk is very alive. And for a period in my life, I was talking to someone else about this—I gave up music. I was on my way to the monastery to be a monk. Gaia House kind of sidetracked me. I'm still here. No, I'm kidding. I changed my mind.

My mind was changed. But the archetype of the monk is still alive in me.

It's a bit like Andrea's question, in the sense that you don't need a big concrete chunk of time or a choice between A and B, between black and white, left and right, or whatever. The monk archetype can be alive for little moments in your day in such a nourishing way. So that hermit, that renunciate, the love of that, the fantasy of that is beautifully alive. Maybe in little actions, maybe in days of more silence or whatever. Maybe in just the smallest little thing, the smallest moment. And that's enough to nourish the soul.

It's getting out of the concretization of either-or big life choices and actually into the fantasy of both, whether it's art, literature in your case, or the monastic, the renunciate. It's like actually both of them can live. When I allow the imaginal to come alive, if I don't, then everything becomes a choice between, becomes so concretized.

So that's one way of approaching the question—actually allowing it to have more imaginal depth and breadth and richness, allowing these pools, you know, and these attractions. Where there's meaningfulness for us, where there's attraction, eros—in this case, the eros of attraction to the

Theravadan archetype—where there's meaningfulness, where there's eros, where there's soul making, where there's beauty, that means there is an image operating there or several images that are alive. And you can—it's helpful to recognize that and let them become alive. And then we have much more freedom, much more depth, much more nuance with the whole thing. How does that sound?

"Well, a lot of this... I suppose it's just the kind of question that always comes up, especially when I'm having to retreat for a while, you know—I can move back into the kind of monk archetype. And then it's like there's sort of a worry that, like, well, you should... If you really want to kind of follow that to its end, then the others should be pushed aside. They're kind of wasting your time in that respect. And so it's just a question of whether things that aren't in that kind of archetype would pull away from the kind of..."

Well, one of the... Two things. One of the reasons, like I said, I left the States, I left the music, actually didn't sell—gave away everything—and wanted to be a monk. And part of the reason for deciding not to was realizing you didn't need to, I didn't need to. If you say, "I have to be a monk to realize the unfabricated, I have to be a monk to realize the depths of emptiness, et cetera," I don't think that's true.

The fruits of practice are available to us if we practice with our hearts, with dedication, with intelligence, with practicing in ways that liberate. We can also practice in ways that don't liberate. Spend lots of time with every earnest, heartful dedication, but I'm just going around in circles. I'm just hitting a brick wall. I don't think you need to be a monk. And I don't think one needs to be a monk. Actually, personally speaking, I don't think you need to be a monk—because I know him, I can say that.

So don't necessarily buy the hype. And then the second thing you touched on is about permission. I know it was kind of a joke, but in a way, just saying something serious about that—Catherine and I were talking—it's like a lot about this kind of retreat, and maybe you've felt it already, is actually giving permission to ways of seeing, to sensibilities, to things that are in us, giving legitimacy and giving permission to. And that's partly why it's good for people to come to Q and A's and groups because you actually see, "Oh, that part of me that I was a bit quiet about is actually shared, recognized, celebrated. It exists in others." So I'm just pulling that word "permission" out and kind of saying something bigger about it.

"My question is about religious ecstasy. I'm just going to name the fact that I'm very frightened right now. As I shared with you this morning, Rob, a lot of this retreat is very familiar, but it's gone really, really deep. So I'm kind of fortunate and blessed to be quite primed to lots of the things that we've been doing. They're very alive in my practice, like having a love being and four elements practice and cosmic kind of love surrounding energy bodies. These are really in my life.

However, the effect of the way that you and Catherine have offered these things to us has caused me to have numerous experiences. I want to say—I want to be brave and go there—I want to say cosmic orgasms. And I don't mean physiological. Like, not consciously at the time, but like looking back and saying, oh, I was enlightened for a few minutes there, and things like that.

What I would like to understand is that I don't feel that I'm going to be grabby or graspy of these experiences, and I have no idea, because I can't read the future, if I will experience them again at home. However, if I go home and find that I can, they might be dangerous or cause, trigger my potential to have psychosis or mania or like feelings of vast bigness, like self-aggrandizement. Please, will you help me understand how I can smallify them, or something. That's not a very good word."

So two things, perhaps I would say.

First, this is related to something important—you have to see what we're doing in the context of a larger path. When Catherine was talking about the black that surrounds the flame, that black is cooling. One of the original meanings of nibbana is cooling. It's one of the meanings—it means cooling.

In a way, people are very... that's why I say I think teaching group retreats is a crazy business. There's so much diversity in what people need, with different personalities and tendencies. It's all wonderful, but some people need to gather the resources of cooling, of calming, of equanimity, as well as the resources of a steadiness of love and steadiness of heart.

So it might be that one of the things for you to consider—not instead of all this, but alongside it—is also gathering and developing access to coolness, to space, to equanimity. This will balance things. It's really about having a vision of the breadth of practice. As I said this morning, this is asking a lot. There's much involved to really have available the picture we're presenting, and different people will need to develop this aspect a bit more, or that aspect a bit more, or this first and then that. You have to know your tendencies.

Since you're speaking of them, one thing would be developing more access to coolness, steadiness, equanimity—a kind of spaciousness of perspective rather than "Wow, here's that amazing thing and I'm just lost in it." What comes is a kind of balance, a poise. The flame can still be there, but it's not just burning everything up or being blown out completely. So consider the kinds of practices and reflections and attitudes that help you access more of that cooling spaciousness that gives you equanimity and steadiness.

The second thing relates to what we've been discussing about putting the divine healing energy you're feeling in contact with the dukkha. Sometimes this means, even when you're feeling great, deliberately bringing up the dukkha—the memory of the dukkha—and putting it right in the middle of that lovely blissful feeling. Just let that wash over, letting the two come into contact. The more you do this, the more the extremes of our existence begin to meet and integrate.

The third thing goes back to this question of real and not real. I don't know what else to say other than I feel it's not the extremity or intensity of bliss or vision that's dangerous—it's not that. It's making that real now, and either identifying oneself with it—"this is who I am"—or believing "that's exactly how things are. This is now the reality." It's the realism that's the problem.

Often what happens is we don't realize the realism is occurring. We're unaware. What have I made real at this moment? It could be a certain vision of the world, or it could be myself when I'm in this state: "I am that." We become so entranced or captivated, enchanted in not such a good sense, that we don't realize there's too much realism in it.

How does one move to let go of realism without falling into dismissal—"Oh, it's all rubbish, waste of a week, could have gone to Torremolinos"? It's again this pulsing thing, finding this middle way.

I can't think of anything else to say about that right now, but it's important to at least have this as an awareness. It's not just you—it's the human mind, it's consciousness. Just being aware of this and looking for it sometimes.

There's a way that, just as with art, these practices and openings of perception can have immense power to heal, to move us, to give beauty. And just like art, they don't have to be real to do that. They don't have to be believed. The power—that's why I made the artistic analogy—is in that. But you might gently be on the lookout for this kind of grasping realism.

So those would be three possibilities.

And I don't want to neglect this side. John?

"Thanks so much for your teaching this morning about mitzvot and blessings, which really spoke to me. It tied in with a worry I had about your last dharma talk—what you said at the end, which maybe I misunderstood. It was about pragmatism. You said something about pragmatism and then talked about the sacred and the profane..."

What these ritual actions offer me is that through the mitzvot of washing the hands and the blessing, the blessing sanctifies the act itself. If I understand what you mean by practicing correctly, it's not just that the action—that the commandment, the good deed—is merely a convenient or useful way. I feel I can't be instrumental about it.

"A useful way for what?" you might ask.

Well, for anything. The act is in itself holy. It's real.

I'm trying to remember exactly what I said. I think it was particularly in the context of circumscribing the sacred as separate from the profane. For example, going on pilgrimage—that place there is a holy place I will journey to from my ordinary place where I live. Or this retreat space is a sacred space, this temple is a sacred space, as opposed to profane space.

Sometimes you encounter teachings that say everything is sacred. In a way, that's where we want to move toward—seeing everything as sacred. But sometimes we want to jump there straight away and simply declare that everything is sacred. Quickly, though, that dissolves into a mush where actually nothing is

sacred.

The pragmatism lies in recognizing the skill of circumscribing certain things as sacred. The biblical temple was sacred—it's not that the rest of life wasn't, but it was definitively a sacred place. The Torah scroll is sacred. There's something essential in this recognition. In Kabbalistic teachings and Hasidism, the encouragement is indeed to see everything as sacred, to redeem it in that sense. But the more intermediate step involves saying "this is sacred" and "that is sacred." You enter into a different relationship.

When you engage in ritual, you're actually creating something—creating a taste of the sacred. This serves a purpose, not merely an intermediate purpose, but intermediate in the sense of being on the way to seeing the sacred everywhere. That's all I meant by pragmatism.

"I understand the word 'circumscribed' now. I think I thought you were suggesting we could just jump over the sacred, whereas what I should have understood is the sanctification of the sacred."

Exactly. Precisely.

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Another question arises about seeing all things as divine, especially the kilesas. The images of the divine we have—like the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas—are all these light gods, these benevolent deities. Even though they might have fierceness in their compassion, they're not the dark gods I've mentioned many times.

For this practitioner, seeing the ordinary and pleasant things as sacred everywhere requires being able to see the dark side of things as sacred as well. Otherwise, somehow it doesn't penetrate as deeply with the light aspects alone.

This touches on something fundamental about spiritual development. People are different with this. Souls are different—they have different resonances, different callings, and different ways of developing. Some people, as you're expressing, can't fully access what the light gods offer unless they integrate the dark gods. Other souls need extensive time with the light gods first.

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It heals something, it reassures something, it settles something, it opens something. And then maybe at some point there's a capacity to integrate the dark gods. So people are different. What you're saying, someone else might be like, uh-uh. And they may not even be ready to hear about dark gods. It's like it just won't fit. Or it disturbs them because of things that have happened in the past, or wounds, or stuff that is too similar to that, or because of cultural conditioning that they just can't see through—all kinds of reasons.

So first of all, there's a difference. I think when I started teaching about the imagination, I was very much

emphasizing the dark gods, and partly... partly I just find a lot of what I teach to be a response to the context around me, which, as you say, it's all this. So it's like, "Well, hold on, what about this, guys? You know, what about this that we're missing?"

What do you need to know about it now? Like, what are you kind of asking? Because you just said, "Could you say a bit more," which I could say lots, but can you... what is it that you're needing?

*Just that there's a lot of nice experiences with the light gods on retreat, personally as well. But there are moments when... yeah. There's more, or it comes in the analytical mind, kind of... it comes on, what about, what about. And then there's the sense, there's this... the sensibility kind of grows, or a kind of sense to that, that something's missing. I can't say much more about... some of the... all the loveliness around here.*

So you're asking how to make that connection?

*Yeah. Because the images we have and the images that I feel like are coming to me don't include those. I think it's more of a question of conditioning and less of a meaning.*

Less of a what?

*More of a question of conditioning, of kind of receiving those... receiving, witches readily, the dark gods.*

Yeah, yeah, sure it is. And it's a question of culture and assumptions and all kinds of stuff. We, you know, culturally for thousands of years, we don't really have a place for the dark gods in Western culture. What happened historically was a lot of gods were sort of amalgamated into the Christ image and other gods like Aphrodite—where you could say sexuality as sacred—got seen as demonic. So culturally in the wider culture, also Gaia House culture, we tend not to—or Gaia House as an institution tends not to really go there and talk about that and include that or sanctify that or recognize the sacredness of the dark gods. And again, that's part of the reason for some of these teachings.

On this retreat, just personally, in contrast to the last few years where I've been saying a lot about darkness, I feel like it's been a little bit more towards the light. But in terms of how to do it, it might be just in imaginal practice—just be open to the diversity of images. A dark god involves a dark image, and "dark" in a very loose sense here. Things like sexuality, things like rage or certain kinds of suffering or loneliness or some kind of what might be regarded as pathological element. And it's like those images, if you like, are darker. Does that make sense?

So you can just be open in your imaginal practice and they will come. Otherwise you wouldn't be asking the question. They're part of what you need. They will come as images. And it's, again, it's always a sense of like, "Okay, the mind is"—not in your case, but maybe the mind is saying, "Oh, I don't know about this one. It's not, you know, it's this or that, or it's not holy or whatever, or it's just my kilesas."

In a way, part of the potency of bringing imaginal work alive and letting it do its soul-making function is just—I'm saying this to everyone now—just granting a little bit of trust to the image. My mind doesn't... I'm

not sure if I can trust it. Just give it a little bit of trust. Just give it a little bit, just the beginnings of belief that there might be something holy here. There might be a treasure for me. There might be something that's asking something of me. And that's enough to inject life and potency into the image, and then it can start doing its work. And some of these can become really beautiful soul-making objects.

And the other way around is actually - so one is just more open in the imaginal practice and they will come. Or as you shared before, it's like what moves you, perhaps a painting that you see or a work of art and a character from that that's more dark, if you like.

A second way is through an emotional, through a bodily energy that comes up. Were it a longer retreat, we'd probably talk much more about desire and eros and that kind of thing. But what is it, again, to feel that and to allow it, in a way, and even just entertain the possibility as an idea: there's something holy here. It's not just an impurity, just a kilesa, just greed, just dirty sensual desire. Just having that attitude liberates it a little bit.

So one way is through things that are arising, and the other way is through images and just being open to more images, a range of images.

Is that OK? Are you sure? Like you said, you could talk. OK.

Okie doke. And let's have just a minute of silence.

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