Eros Unfettered (Part 3)

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Let's look a little more at various aspects of what's involved in the movement of soul-making - what's necessary for the Eros-Psyche-Logos dynamic to unfold and have its range and process. And correspondingly, how that movement and expansion and deepening and widening can be stifled or blocked or diverted, how the movement of Eros can be diverted.

Again, why so much? Why are we circling around this, weaving in and out of this whole business about the soul-making dynamic and the idea of Eros-Psyche-Logos being stimulated by Eros? We're circling because the ideas are unfamiliar - they're new ideas. They are not in circulation in the culture, certainly not in Dharma culture, nor in the wider culture either. Ideas that are new, that are unfamiliar, that are not in circulation, need repeating. For us, we need to chew on them, to digest them, to incorporate them, to assimilate them, to be able to use them, to actually have them be powerful.

So they need that circling, they need the circulation of our reflection in our lives. Not just abstract intellectual reflection - there's a level of that - but actually reflection in our lives, so we actually use them, implement them, bring them to bear on our experience in life, in relationship, on the meditation cushion, in relationship with everything, with nature, with whatever we love.

I believe, and I hope at least, that trying to forge a conceptual framework that is supportive is actually really in the service of opening up what the path can be, opening up new territories - beautiful territories, important territories. All that is served by having a powerful conceptual framework as part of the process.

When we talked about the small, loose definition, beginning provisional definition of Eros, we said it was a desire to connect, to touch, to contact more. We can very easily assume that there's a limit implicit in touching. Once you've touched, you've touched. You can touch for longer, but once you've touched, you've touched. Once you've touched a whole body or a whole object, you've touched it. Once you've connected, you've connected. Once you contact, you've contacted. So we can easily assume that there's a limit implicit in that.

But actually, what we're saying now is that it's open-ended. So the words touch, connect, contact, certainly words like penetrate, is open and there's no limit to that penetration necessarily at all. Or open or receive the beloved other. Open to and receive the beloved other. There's no limit to the opening and to the receiving or know them - or want to know them more, know this more, this beloved object, this beloved other. There's no limit to the penetration, the depth of penetration, the scope and depth of opening and receiving and knowing.

Using those words, but not implying a limit, because we're saying that in the process of Eros stimulating and igniting the Eros-Psyche-Logos dynamic - the mutual expansion, mutual fertilization - the sense of self, the imaginal self and the imaginal other grow. They expand, they get deeper, they get richer, more complicated, potentially at least. Because both the subject who opens and receives and the object or the other, the beloved other, the erotic object that is penetrated or opened to - both the subject and the self and the other grow potentially - there's potentially no limit to how much penetration or this process of penetration, of opening, receiving, knowing, touching, connecting, contacting.

If we approach it from the other angle, we could say that Eros, from what we've said so far, stimulates Psyche and Logos, the imaginal and the idea, or the concepts involved in the sense of the other, of the beloved other, and also self and all that. Looking at it from the other angle, just as important and valid, we could say that Psyche and Logos, image and idea, need to allow Eros' further penetration and opening. They need to allow that "more" aspect of Eros.

Whatever image we have of this erotic object or the other, whatever idea, that image and idea need to allow more penetration, more opening. They need to allow that movement of Eros. Wherever it's at in that process, it needs to have something that allows more. If it doesn't need it right now, sooner or later it will need it.

What this implies, to state it again, is that the way of looking at images and the way of looking at perceptions is significant, because either it supports Psyche and Logos to allow that further penetration, further opening that Eros wants, or it doesn't.

Actually, to state again, the way we are using the word "image" already includes a way of looking at it that sees it as imaginal. So that is supportive to a certain extent or to a certain level. But still that might need to grow.

If we step back a little and just look at this whole notion of ways of looking in relation to soul-making, we can see that certain ways of looking not just limit soul-making, but actually dampen it. They put out the fire of soul-making, cause that stream to dry up. In a more watery image, they dissipate the imaginal or dismiss it or reduce it. They put out the fire of Eros. Certain ways of looking will do that.

Among those ways of looking that kill soul-making, some of them reduce clinging and some of them actually increase clinging. But we can differentiate three broad directions or kinds of ways of looking, or views. There is what we might call a group of views that are realist or flatly humanistic. Their view of something that arises might be, for example, that this is a result of or this is representing something that happened in my childhood, representing a faculty of my mind, a component - reducing it in those ways, or even more, this is just a result of random neuronal firings.

So there's a way that the human being is reduced to a sort of flat, modernist, humanist version of what a human being is. And that will not support soul-making. That kind of view, in the realist, flatly humanist

perspective, will not support soul-making.

A second group of ways of looking consists of approaches that actually fabricate less, that lead to less fabrication than the usual state of consciousness. This could be just a little less fabrication. What we usually call mindfulness in the traditional sense of the word is, relatively speaking, a degree, a modicum of less fabrication than usual—or bare attention, or what have you. And then there are other ways of looking which actually fabricate much less than the usual state of consciousness, much less than bare attention or mindfulness. We've touched on those before. They can take you into jhanas or deep states of oneness and eventually even the transcending of all perception and all conventional experience, knowing and opening to the unfabricated, to non-fabrication. So there's a group of ways of looking that actually decrease fabrication—the second group.

And the third group we could call ways of looking that are soul-making—the soul-making perspectives—where there isn't this reduction going on. We are not reducing the image or the imaginal perception of something. Neither are we dissolving it by fabricating perception less. So we're not blurring out into a kind of oneness of white light or deep unfabrication or something like that, nor are we just reducing this thing in some kind of psychological explanation or biological explanation or whatever it is.

So three groups of ways of looking. Actually—and we'll return to this because it's not that simple—the relation to this process of unfabrication, our relationship to it and our conceptual framework of what's happening as we engage ways of looking that fabricate less, can actually become soul-making through the relationship with that and through the ideas we have of it. We will return to that, but just to say it's not so simple, the divisions between these three ways of looking. But broadly speaking, we can delineate three.

When there is—or when there has come about in one way or another—in the perception of an other, a sense that there is more there. There is more depth here. There is a sense of unfathomability to this object, to this image, to this person that I'm seeing soulfully. There's a sense of more to move into, of mystery here—into which, a mystery of the other, a depth of mystery of the other and the perception of the other, into which the eros might expand, might penetrate, might open, or to which it might open. Then that sense of more, that sense of other dimensions, even if we don't see them clearly, that sense actually stimulates eros. It's working the other way around. The psyche, the logos, the sense, the perception stimulates the eros and inflames the eros.

And what happens there—and again, if you really enter into imaginal practice, whether it's with, so to speak, purely intrapsychic images or, again, with someone or something in nature or some person in your life that actually is alive to you as image in this soul-making, soulful, beautiful way—then we get the sense that that other, that object, if you like, contains a multiplicity of images. Some of them will be clearly perceived, maybe right now or maybe we know them from before through our history, through working with this object, this person, this image. And some are kind of intuited. You can feel them there. You can sense the presence of other images within this figure, within this person, within your perception of them.

But they're not yet known. They remain sort of presences intuited, but vaguely intuited, but not known.

And with that, there's a sense of this inexhaustible mystery that can arise—that the depth of soul in this person that I'm beholding, the depth of soul I'm beholding in this person, or in this thing, or in nature. Nature in soul. Nature has this inexhaustible unfathomability, levels of mystery to it. And always then, sometimes the intuition, the intimation, is that always the unknown is greater than the known. There's always more to discover because we've learned about this infinity, the potential limitlessness of this process.

And so we can actually palpably feel or palpably perceive a sense that the dimensions and the faces that are not yet known to me, not yet clearly perceived to me, will always, so to speak, outnumber the ones that are known, that have been beautiful and soul-making to me so far. That sense of inexhaustible mystery stimulates the eros, is itself soul-making.

So we can say that eros requires an image, but it also maybe requires, if you like, a region of what is as yet unknown. This sense of territory it can move into, of a landscape of soul, a world of soul, into which our souls can move, so to speak, as we penetrate the other, or to which we can open, needs the image, but also the sense of the mystery, the as-yet-unknown, in the image, with the image. And we could even say that the eros generates this very perception, stimulates the image and stimulates the sense of something more, some territory beyond—this pothos generating a beyond, if you like, that it can then enter, the soul territory, penetrate, open to.

Now, this infinity, this inexhaustible mystery, it might be of a kind of universal nature, as we've touched on before. Very common ones: a universal love, and the infinity of that, or the universality of awareness, or even the unfabricated. You actually get the sense of that shining through everything, if you like, everything embodying that in a mysterious way. But the inexhaustibility that we're talking about here predominantly, or in addition to those kinds of inexhaustibility that are universal—so this universal awareness shining through is the same in everything, or the universal love is pervasive, the same in everything—

So when we speak of the inexhaustable mystery that eros perceives in the beloved, there can be different kinds of infinities operating. One type might be of a universal nature—universal love and its infinite depth, the universality of awareness, or even the unfabricated nature of things shining through everything, each thing mysteriously embodying these qualities. Yet with these universal infinities, there's a sameness: this person I'm beholding expresses universal awareness or love in the same essential way as everything else. That's the essence permeating all things.

But in addition to this kind of perception of mystery and infinity, there's a different kind of inexhaustibility that emerges through what we've been calling the vertical spectrum of the imaginal. Here we discover dimensions inherent within the beloved other—an infinite fecundity, an endless proliferation of theophanies manifesting through the particulars of that soul, that object we're perceiving. This is the

infinite fecundity of soul, of divine manifestation, expressing itself through the specific details and qualities of the beloved.

Another way of understanding this interconnected process is that eros generates this very sense of infinite depth and mystery, then falls in love with what it has generated and moves into it, filling it completely. Eros carries within itself this tendency, this inclination, this creative impetus that fertilizes and stimulates the fecundity of both soul and mind. Eros is cosmogonos—world-creating—giving birth to ever more perception, more dimensions of seeing, greater richnesses, complexities, depths and breadths of experience.

In this expansion of the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, there is truly a birthing of cosmoses. Through this soul-making process, eros simultaneously creates, fabricates, and discovers more psyche, more image. There's an increase in the range of images perceived within the beloved object, and more generally an expansion of the perceived facets and dimensions of things—especially of what we love. More mystery emerges, along with a deeper sense of dimensionality and inexhaustible depth.

Now let us explore the logos aspect more carefully—how it must grow and stretch to support this dynamic, how it can become limited, and when it either nurtures or inhibits the eros-psyche-logos process through its own constraints or rigidity.

When we speak of logos or conception, we're not always referring to something conscious or involving actual deliberate thought. Logos often operates at what we might call an unconscious level—we remain unaware of the views and conceptions that are actually governing our perception. These operate subliminally, usually based on assumptions we've unwittingly absorbed from our surrounding culture or subcultures.

Logos encompasses a broad spectrum. Sometimes it involves elaborate, consciously worked-out conceptual frameworks, but much of the time it operates far more subtly, woven into the very fabric of perception. We rarely become conscious of these operating assumptions, and even more rarely have we actually arrived at them through our own careful investigation. More often, we've simply absorbed them through cultural indoctrination.

When logos—our conception or understanding of something—becomes too narrow or fixed, it constrains the entire dynamic in various ways. Consider, for instance, a rigidly held materialist or physicalist worldview that insists things are essentially just matter. In this view, consciousness emerges from genetic and neural processes shaped by cultural conditioning affecting neuronal activity, while matter remains simply matter—trees and inanimate objects are nothing more than their material composition.

Such a view, when held too tightly and inflexibly, actually prevents the imaginal level from blossoming. It blocks the fertile emergence of multiple dimensions of perception. Even when something deeper wants to arise in our experience, it gets immediately dismissed because the rigid logos insists, "That's not reality.

This thing is just X." This dismissal often occurs barely consciously—the logos simply declares everything to be purely material, so any sense of other dimensions gets aborted before it can even reach birth.

When eros arises within such a constrained logos—and remember that eros always seeks more—that "more" becomes severely limited. Since the logos permits only one dimension of reality (the material), the more that eros naturally seeks is forced to operate solely within that single material dimension. Eros must look for its "more," must find its expansion, only in physical terms.

Where else can it go? It becomes constrained to seek fulfillment through physical acts. In sexuality, it must focus on physical acts alone. Or perhaps it seeks satisfaction through acquisition—buying things, accumulating material objects, obtaining more of this or that physical, tangible commodity. The pothos within eros, that yearning movement toward "more," can only move horizontally within this single permitted dimension.

But what happens then in relationship—whether with a lover, spouse, or any cherished object—when eros can only move into the physical realm? When we can only engage with what we love through whatever physical interactions that one dimension allows, and those possibilities become exhausted? When the physical acts and material engagements have been fully explored and no longer provide the nourishment that eros requires?

What can eros do then? Eros needs fuel to sustain its flame. Without that fuel, the flame of eros simply dies out.

In many ways, one of the possibilities, and sometimes it can happen almost pervasively in a person's life. You can see something was alive in childhood and through the teenage years and adolescence—the flame of eros there, perhaps in all kinds of ways, questioning and aliveness and stretching things. And then maybe in the twenties, or maybe in the thirties, or maybe even the forties or fifties, something... it's just lost fuel. It's not being fed something. Sometimes it's in the logos, in the limitation of ideation that does not give enough fuel for the eros. And the flame is extinguished.

Or maybe, as I said, it's forced out. For instance, I'm in this relationship or marriage and I'm only seeing it one-dimensionally. Or the dimensions are very limited, let's put it that way, in terms of who is this person, how rich, how deep are they potentially to me? Maybe they're not just material, but maybe they have a certain interiority that we grant them—people and their psychological complexity in the typical modernist view. But the dimensions are limited.

And then what happens? If there's eros once more, where does it go? It has to maybe go to other partners. I have to find someone else because I can only go at one dimension. I can't go deeper into this beloved. There is no deeper. I disallow it. The logos disallows it. So I go looking elsewhere.

Or maybe there's some other area in my life where I go and take up this or that something. And maybe that's an area where the logos actually allows a certain expansion. So maybe it's rich. Or maybe it just goes

again into acquiring material things. So there was this thing and I was enamored with it, but because that thing, whatever it is—a possession, a house even—can only really be one-dimensional, then I need to acquire something else. I need to acquire material things or status or something. The eros can only move on one-dimensional, very limited dimensions. There's no vertical depth, other dimensions for it to expand into.

I wonder about something—just thinking about this, I wonder about something like pornography or pornography addiction. And I don't know, I've actually never been into pornography, but I wonder whether, again, part of what sometimes happens there is that the person engaging in that is caught in a limited dimensionality, just seeing matter in a very flat way. Or perhaps there's a split between where other dimensions are alive in their life—there's a sort of spirituality—but there's a split between spirituality and sexuality, so that in relation to sexuality, it's not spiritual. It doesn't have the possibility of feeling, sensing, perceiving, knowing, conceiving other dimensions within sexuality. So there's a split.

And I wouldn't want to speculate, but again, one wonders about abuse within the church and the clergy where people have spiritual teachings that do divorce the sexual from the spiritual in ways that don't allow a dimensionality in relation to sexuality. Or the person just has a materialistic view in the first place, a one-dimensional view.

So all this—pornography feels soulless. Why? Well, it is. In our language, it is. It's exactly that. It feels soulless because it is soulless, meaning there's no possibility there for the imaginal. There's lots of possibility for the imaginary, but no possibility for the imaginal, for the sense of dimensionality, of depth, of mystery, in the body, in the beauty, in the sexuality. There is really an objectification in the sense of narrowing down this or that object or other to just one dimension. There is an absence of soul, a poverty of psyche, a poverty of image.

And when that's the case, then we get what we might call greed. It's got nowhere to move, no depth in which to move. Again, I don't know, and part of this is just kind of wandering out loud, but it may be that someone who's into pornography... there isn't an absence of metta there. I'm thinking of actually two people, students who shared with me what they would term pornography addiction, and both of them had quite a degree of kindness and metta. So it's not an absence of metta, but something is blocked in the eros, psyche, logos dynamics—blocked from its natural inclination to expand, blocked by some kind of logos that either just sees one-dimensionally or doesn't allow dimensionality to infuse the sense of sexuality and physicality.

So we could say, in other words, that with something like pornography, maybe there's no psyche or logos beyond a one-dimensionality with respect to the other, certainly with respect to self and world, and with respect to the eros itself. So that fourfold—self, other, world, eros—that fourfold confluence or co-constellation, the psyche and logos with respect to each and all of them is limited to being one-dimensional and reified. "It is this. This is the truth. I am like this. Sexuality is like this"—whatever.

So in our language, if that small definition of eros, that initial impetus, is there—if it's moving in a person, if they have a lot of libido and life force, and there is that eros—the logos and the psyche won't allow the eros-psyche-logos to expand. And it goes, perhaps, if it's there, it will go just into some kind of greed or pleasure-seeking. It has to stay at that one level. Limited.

Now actually, we could say any prioritizing of one dimension or level of being, existence, perception—any shrinking of that vertical spectrum of the imaginal, whether it's to a so-called purely material level in the way that modernism conceives of it or senses it, or whether it's even some other kind of elevated, ethereal, almost disembodied level—any prioritizing or shrinking down to one dimension or level of that vertical spectrum of the imaginal, and a belief with that, "This or that level is what's really real," any of that will limit soul-making.

It's the openness of the sense of multidimensionality that encourages, supports, stimulates soul-making. And conversely, soul-making opens up that sense of multidimensionality. As always, there's a mutual dependence there.

I think as we're talking—and I think I might have said this before—we can get the sense that eros, psyche, logos, we can talk of them as if they're three almost separate things that come into interaction and mutual insemination. Or we can just as well say they're facets—three facets of one dynamic, of one process, three facets of soul-making.

And this soul-making, in these three facets, can be open and creative, or any of those three—the eros, the psyche, the logos—could be constricted somehow. And then when any of them is constricted, it can hinder or block the whole movement of the soul-making. So the whole process, the whole dynamism gets stuck. The whole dynamic gets stuck at some point, at some stage—rigidified, ossified, blocked, cramped.

So there are so many possibilities here. But for instance, what happens, again, in relationship with a beloved—any kind of beloved—if the logos, the idea, the conception of what a human being is generally, and in which case what this person is, is limited?

Either psychologically, it's limited in the way that a lot of modern psychotherapy might consider a person. Certainly they're complex. Certainly they're a result of past conditioning and family influences and cultural influences and all that. So it's a view. And we acknowledge and we feel nowadays, with modernism, a certain interiority to what a human being is—that a human being has that perhaps in many cases they didn't have, that sense, at other times in history.

But still, with all that, even with that kind of interiority, even with that kind of psychology—Freud's psychology or anything that came out of that, a lot of modern psychotherapy—there's still often, not always, but often there's a kind of limit to the logos of what a human being is. And that can function as a limit. It limits the soul-making movement, the soul-making growth and expansion.

Or it might be just the idea of this particular individual: I have a limited, fixed idea of who or how they

are. Or my idea, my logos, my conceptual framework that's operating of relationship. Or of eros—what eros is. Or of sex and sexuality and that movement. I have a limited idea.

Even whatever it is. It might be "Sex is..." Actually, one of these students who considered himself to have a pornography addiction said to me, "You know, sex is just biological instinct. It's just biological instinct." It's a certain limited logos of what sex is.

But even ones that sound like they're more generous and richer and more heartful—"Sex is the expression of love," or "The sexual impulse is a spiritual impulse towards union"—all of them may have some validity. But when it's limited in that way, that too can function as a limited logos. And that will limit the soul-making possible.

Or in relation to sex, "This is how it should be"—some idea of how sex should be, which would include then a clinging to an idea or an image, a self-image of the psyche there, of my sexuality: how I am, how I am sexually, my sexual identity. And that may have got narrowed down or rigidified in all kinds of ways—along character or performance or all kinds of stuff. But there, the logos or the image, the psyche, in regard to my sexuality has become rigid or limited or both. And then again, the eros actually is hindered. The eros in its wish to expand actually gets hindered, blocked.

So you can see how many—maybe perhaps almost infinite ways—the eros-psyche-logos dynamic can get blocked and limited.

Perhaps we could say that it's infinite. Whether it's basically either from the eros being hindered, or the psyche, or the logos, or some combination of those, the permutations individually are infinite, perhaps.

We could also, for instance, cling to the image of another—a certain image we have of another. We neglect to see, we fail to see that this image that I have of this other is dependent on my way of looking. We believe and we act and we assume that the way we're seeing them, the image we have of them, is independent of the way of looking that one is employing at any time. There's a reification of that image.

Or, again, of marriage. Marriage is this. We have a certain image of what marriage is, or a certain logos of what marriage is. And all this can prevent, in different ways, stifle and limit the expansion, the deepening, the widening, the fertilizing of the soul-making.

Now, of course, in an actual relationship with another, soul-making in a relationship—or for the relationship to be a fertile field for soul-making, for the continuing fire of the eros in that relationship between the two there, or in a community, or whatever—it needs a basis in actuality. So it needs, of course, a basis in taking care of our communication. Really making sure the communication is skillful and supportive and helpful and caring. It needs a basis in kindness, in love. We need to voice love, express love, express appreciation. Without that kind of basis, the soul-making dynamic will founder. It won't have enough basis. Generally speaking. Again, it will be limited without that basis at another level, if you like.

But sometimes other things happen in relationship or are blocked in relationship. Sometimes the eros of one partner has a depth to it and a fire to it that is not matched by the other, has an aliveness to it and a range to it that is not matched by the other partner. The spark and the fullness of the eros either is just inherently not matched—they're just different personalities—or, in one of the partners, the eros is blocked. So it's actually there, somehow, but for different reasons—it can be very complex—and the eros is actually blocked. So one partner, their eros is flowing, and the flame is burning, and very alive, and the other, it's just not, and there's a mismatch.

Sometimes what happens is the logos and the psyche, the ideation, the concepts and the images that perhaps were shared—the ideas about life, about relationship, about being—the ideas and images that were shared no longer overlapped. Perhaps there isn't enough overlap to start with, and so there's not enough fuel for the mutual eros to burn. It can't really go anywhere with that. So the eros, again, gets limited, gets stifled, doesn't have the opportunity to grow.

Or, you know, again, for all kinds of reasons, something in him, something in her, in the relationship. Again, I don't have to make it as if it's objectively existing or not existing in them, but something in him or her, in this relational constellation, in this perception, in this dependent co-arising of the relationship, something in him or her doesn't allow the deepening of the psyche, the deepening of the imaginal dimension in relationship to him or her. They can no longer—there's a limit to how my sense of their soul doesn't open into more mystery, more dimensionality, more depth. And it's complex. The psychology here is complex in relation to all this, in relation to why that happens. So that there's a limitation on this eros-psyche-logos dynamic.

Let's make it clear. When we talk about logos, when we talk about ideas or concepts, by nature, their nature is to limit. They define and delineate. That's the nature of ideas. That in itself is not a problem. We touched on this a little bit obliquely in an earlier talk. But that's the nature of logoi, of concepts, of ideas—they limit, they delimit, and they define, and they delineate. No problem. That's just how they function.

The problem, from a soul-making perspective, is when the limit of a logos is reached with respect to the sense of the other, with respect to the idea of the other, of self, of world, of humans in general, of the soul, of psyche, of eros itself, of divinity—with respect to any of that—when a certain logos that's in place, when the limit of that is reached, and it doesn't allow the ongoing expansion or deepening of the soul-making dynamic, and when the limit is inflexible. So it reaches just like hitting a wall, and the wall will not shatter because it's just entrenched, whatever this idea is, and it won't stretch, so that it won't stretch or shatter to allow more territory for the play of this dynamic of eros-psyche-logos, playing together, this soul-making fecundity and fertilization. There's just something wants to expand, but the limit is reached.

So it's not the fact that ideas, logoi, concepts are limited and limiting by their nature. That's not the problem, because that's always the case.

That's how they work, as I said. Really what's at stake here, what the issue is, is where is the soul's process right now in relation to the limits of the concepts and ideas, the logoi that are in place? Where is my soul-making process at—that intermingling of image and eros and ideation—in relation to the limits that are in place of the logos?

What is the expanse that's created by my conceptual structure? Do I still have more room? Does the soul, if you like, in the soul-making process still have more room within the limits, the playground created by a certain conceptual structure, a conceptual framework, a certain logos? Or have I already filled it? Has the soul already explored that whole territory, that whole playground and needs to expand? It wants more and the more cannot be provided by the limits of that playground.

So that's really the question at any moment in time. Not so much even what the logos is, or how it relates to someone else's logos, or anything like that. It's really a question of relative pacing, if you like, of expansion between the different elements of the soul-making process. If the image wants to expand and the eros wants to expand, but the logos is limiting it, that's a problem—if it wants to expand beyond what the logos can allow.

With all this, I hope you're getting the sense that when we talk about logos or concept or idea, we're not talking about something abstract. In a way, that's kind of irrelevant. Abstract—the word actually means to remove: ab, from; tract, to take from, to remove. So we're not talking about something removed from life, removed from perception and experience and embodiment and living. And again, we're talking about something that's always operating.

Certainly a concept, an idea, a logos can be abstract. But in terms of practice, when we talk about ways of looking in meditation—whether it's to do with emptiness, dependent arising, or whether it's to do with soul-making—we need to actually practice entertaining different concepts, different conceptual structures, different logoi, in ways that actually flow into, actually inform, actually shape a way of looking so that they can be soul-making.

We're not talking about just thinking something intellectually in a way that doesn't come into the way of looking, in a way that actually affects one's life. Sometimes—and this is a really important point—sometimes people don't get the connection here. Why are you talking so much about ideas? And actually find it hard to bring an idea to bear on the actual sensing and seeing and embodiment and life and perception.

We can't just assume that they do connect, because it might just be that we're entertaining this idea abstractly, just listening: "Oh, that's very interesting, fascinating." But it's not actually—we need a way to bring an idea into the world, to the world that we live, in the way that we live it, to the perception. Ideas are there anyway, as I said. What we're interested in is this flexibility of concepts and ways of looking and plugging them in, moving between them, again, in ways that make a difference.

So when we talk—really what I mean by all this is not so much the abstract logoi, but the logoi, the logos, the concepts that are actually lived, that are alive. If they're unconscious, can I make them conscious? And if they're stuck, can I bring in new ones and fresh ones and develop that flexibility? We're talking about the concepts that are lived, that are alive, that are embodied, and that actually involve and affect the heart and the experience and the perception.

Even more than that, I would add: playing with different ideas and conceptual frameworks and actually entertaining them in this way that I'm talking about—in the perception, in the experience—and more than that, creating them, forging them, as we're doing now. This process, both the flexibility of entertaining them, but also building new ones, that is soul-making. That process of engaging with the creativity of conceptuality, of idea, of mind, is itself part of soul-making, stimulates soul-making, supports the inflaming of the eros and the increase of the psyche.

You can see how much idea comes into our lives. For instance, faith is a certain ideation, we could say. And there are many different kinds here. But for example, in relation to some personal difficulty that's arisen in my life or that I might be going through, or some pattern I have in the personality that's difficult or something that befalls my body or me—and the idea, the logos, that it is somehow necessary to soul. It's an idea. And that it somehow has divine roots, that it mirrors something divine. These are ideas.

But if I can plug them in, just play with that a little bit, they make the experience rich. They make the personal difficulty—they give it depth and dimensionality. They make it feel necessary. They make it imaginal and eventually divine. So logos affects perception, affects the image, the lived image we have of what we deal with, ourselves and the things that befall us and make us up.

Then something interesting, because we talk a lot in the Dharma of relating to this pain or that pain or this difficulty or that difficulty with metta. Metta to myself who has to go through this, has to bear this. Metta even to the phenomenon of the pain.

I have spoken about relating to pain and difficulty with metta on different retreats—metta to ourselves as we bear these challenges, even metta to the phenomenon of pain itself. But there exists another possibility: not just metta, but eros in relationship to difficulty. The possibility that our sense of difficulty becomes enriched, given dimensions, rather than simply fading away. While holding difficulties in kindness and finding ways of looking that allow them to fade are entirely valid approaches, there is also this potential for eros in relationship to our own personal difficulties and the challenging events of our existence.

We explored Amor Fati during the re-enchanting retreat—the poetry of perception, the love of one's fate—and examined what allows this to become a lived, heartfelt, soul-felt experience.

In relation to anything at all, a view that reduces it—say psychologically—won't lead to soul-making, or will lead to very limited soul-making and very limited expansion of the sense of sacredness in life.

Psychological reductionism and other forms of reductionism may still prove very helpful in addressing this or that difficulty, but they won't lead to soul-making. The reductionism inherent in such logos won't support the expansion, the growth, the organic and potentially limitless development that soul-making offers.

Unless our very psychological difficulties, obstacles, personal challenges, and the difficult events that befall us are seen as images—unless they become imaginal. The psychology itself and the difficulty itself must become images, or the logos through which we perceive them must allow them to become images. Then they become re-enchanted.

Catherine's talk was entitled "Re-Enchanting Dukkha." The very dukkha itself needs this transformation. The logos through which I perceive difficulty must somehow either avoid psychological reduction entirely, or if I do consider it psychologically, that whole psychology must reveal its other levels—mirroring, necessity of soul, divine purpose.

What happens in my childhood, what unfolds in my life, the journey into which I am guided or constrained by life's circumstances—this too receives other imaginal dimensions. A difficulty might indeed result from psychological patterns, but the whole constellation gains another imaginal dimension. The dukkha is re-enchanted.

Thank you for listening.

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