Logos in the Garden of Souls (Part 1)

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So let's continue in our circling motion, our circling movement between the different elements and facets of this whole area that we're trying to open up of eros and soul-making. And continue our weave back and forth, revisiting certain of those elements and weaving them together with others back and forth like a loom.

I mentioned that I would like to say more about the whole aspect of conceptual framework and draw that in and draw that out more. So I hope it's obvious that any path that we wish to walk down—spiritual path, psycho-spiritual path, whatever—and any set of practices that form part of that path, that path and those practices need some kind of undergirding in a conceptual framework, a logos that holds them together, that puts them in relationship to each other, that makes sense of them, gives them direction.

So they go together; they are indispensable to each other. A conceptual framework is indispensable to a path. And as such it forms, in a way, a map or part of a map of where that path is trying to go. It helps in the navigation—that's what we were talking about before, navigation. What is the art of navigation with all these practices? The conceptual framework is very much a part of that at many different levels.

One level is a kind of macro level, the other level is moment-to-moment. The conceptual framework, our understanding of that, informs our moment-to-moment decisions and responses in practice. In practice, in life, we are constantly meeting, encountering a new situation, a new moment with a new experience, or this or that coming to the fore. And the question is, how should I respond? How should I navigate in relation to what is coming up, in relation to where I want to go? All of that is informed by the larger conceptual framework.

Conceptual framework or logos also makes sense. We need something to make sense, or part of us needs something to make sense of our experiences, of the whole notion of the path, of our life. Conceptual framework is part of that. It offers that, it contributes to that. Actually, there's a whole other level in which it makes sense in the different meaning of the word. It makes sense. In other words, it makes experience. We'll come back to that.

But it forms for us a vessel, if we go back to that alchemical metaphor that we were drawing on. The conceptual framework forms a vessel, forms a structure that contains—we feel contained by, supported by—so that we can trust our movement on the path. Are we going in the right direction? We trust our experiences as they unfold, or we know what to trust. So in that sense, it gives us a sense of stability, support and stability, and that's part of balance, isn't it? So we're talking about navigating and finding balance with the eros, with the imaginal. So conceptual framework, logos, is part of what grounds us. It's a

head thing. We say it's a head thing, but actually it grounds us. It gives us a foundation. It gives us a kind of scaffolding.

Now, especially if we're encountering intense experiences, but even if they're not intense, if we're just feeling ourselves move into what might be new territory, or edgy territory, if it's our edge, or if it's regarded by the mainstream of society, or whatever culture we're moving into—Dharma culture, or other, larger culture—as edgy or dangerous or ridiculous, then it's really, really supportive there in all of that grounding, foundation, scaffold, support, vessel. And eros and the imaginal and soul-making for a lot of people is edgy or is regarded as edgy and all that other stuff.

So in a way, to give a sort of image, metaphor for a conceptual framework, it's kind of like a trellis in a garden—a sort of wooden scaffolding that forms a support for a certain flower, maybe roses or something, to grow, and they grow along or up and wind their way along this trellis, and then they can flower, and they can have their beauty, and their beauty can be seen, and we can receive that. And the structure, the trellis, is providing a structure that's supportive and for the sake of all the beauty that flowers there.

So oftentimes we dismiss, or we want to get away from conceptual framework. We don't realize actually how supportive it is. Actually, a better analogy, even better than the trellis, would be for the roses in a rose garden—would be a tree, perhaps a fruit tree. The tree is its own structure: the roots, the trunk, the branches. We could say that the conceptual framework is like the structure of a tree. It forms a structure.

What's perhaps better about the tree analogy is that it's not like the structure is one thing and the soul-making is another thing, as it was in the trellis analogy to the roses. Here, the structure, the conceptual structure, is a part of soul. It's an aspect of the tree. It's totally integrated with the tree. The trunk, the roots, the branches, the structure, the shape of that is the tree. It's part of the tree. It's completely embodied, incorporated.

They're not separate things.

So logos and conceptual framework is part, a dimension, an aspect of soul and soul-making and psyche. Even though we say eros, psyche, logos, remember I said they're not really separate. So that might be a useful analogy.

And then we have the fruit and the beauty and the flowers of the tree and all that a tree can offer. But the tree is—the structure of the tree is the tree.

And also in this tree analogy, it's not a fixed structure. So the structure of that tree is organic, it grows, just as our conceptual framework can, and as I've been saying, needs to grow. The logos needs to grow.

Just like a tree, it's not a fixed, limited, preset, rigid structure. It is actually organic and it grows, and that growing of the tree and of the conceptual frameworks are responsive. In other words, they respond.

If you look at the way, let's say, an apple tree grows in an orchard, you'll see how responsive it is to the

light—as plants are phototropic to different degrees—it responds to the light, it responds to the other trees around it, it responds to all kinds of things. It responds also to itself when it's getting too heavy or too lopsided.

Sometimes that response is actually breaking. A branch breaks off or the tree splits in two, a crack appears. Sometimes the tree gets too big for itself, and conceptual frameworks also can break, get too big, a crack appears.

Can we include that fact, that organic fact of the way trees grow, and that organic fact about conceptuality and conceptual frameworks, can we include that in a larger scale conceptual framework?

Right there, there's this Kabbalistic idea, mythical idea of the breaking of the vessels. One kind of vessel, as I said, is a conceptual framework. And those too in our life break at times. Though that can be very difficult—I'll come back to this—I would also say, sad the person whose conceptual framework doesn't break at least once in their life. I'll come back to that.

But here we have perhaps an analogy where the structure is not separate from the fruit, from the soul-making, from what the soul is. It's not fixed. It's organic, it grows—that's part of its nature—and it grows in a responsive way with what's around it. And the breaking might be part of it.

Now I've also said, and it's one of the things that's really worth repeating: when I say concept or logos or conceptual framework or even idea, I'm not just referring to something abstract, something removed, taken away from life, away from experience, away from embodiment into some kind of disembodied intellectual separate realm of the mind. There can be that—we can have conceptual frameworks that's what we're doing with them and that's what they become for us—but mostly I'm really talking about what we live, an indispensable element of our existence that comes into our life, that we actually end up embodying, whether we know it or like it or not, comes into our experience.

Mostly, I'm not even talking about what we think. Certainly a conceptual framework we elucidate and elaborate on in words and thought, and we reflect on it and put it together with other ideas and make sure we understand all that thinking. Of course, I'm including that, but I'm also making the point that I've made before that concept, logos, as I would use that word, operates even when we are not thinking.

Even in the second jhāna and other jhānas and those kinds of experiences, there is not thinking going on, but there is conceptuality going on.

If we don't see that—if you don't see that, and I know some people are really wedded to the idea of non-conceptual awareness in different ways. For some people it means bare attention, for other people it has a Dzogchen context or whatever. But if you don't see that, then what I would unfortunately say to you is it just needs more practice. You need to practice with more subtlety of sensitivity and noticing, but particularly to practice in the direction of less fabrication. So much so that you begin to see the relationship with concepts, conceptualities, in the present moment, in the mind—how they not just shape

the fabrication, therefore the experience, but actually how they contribute, how they actually fabricate anything at all.

In other words, without conception, if you really drop all conception, nothing gets fabricated, no experience gets fabricated. So where there's conception, it fabricates experience, and where there's experience, there's some conception bound up, wrapped up in that experience.

Even the barest level of conceptuality—some kind of knowing with some kind of knower and known, therefore subject and object, the barest, barest, most refined level, and some kind of sense of a present moment. That's conceptuality. Subject, object, and time is the barest level of conceptuality. And pulled almost immediately in with all that is a whole bunch of other stuff about potentiality and change, and therefore past and future, and all of that.

But even that—I don't have any label for what is appearing as object and what is known. It could be a very subtle perception, but where there is perception, experience, appearance, there is concept.

And certainly at the level of mindfulness or so-called bare attention, you just need to play with: is there a subtle concept? This is now a less subtle level of conceptuality, but is there a relatively subtle concept I'm not even conscious of?

This is what I'm mindful of. But for example, am I regarding it as something real? Am I regarding it even as something material? Whatever it is—this tree that I'm looking at, this touch of the foot on the earth—what's wrapped up in that concept of materiality? Or am I regarding it as an appearance, which is more, if you know the philosophical term, of a phenomenological bracketing there. It's appearance. That's already regarding it as appearance.

A mindfulness that regards this touch of the foot as appearance is different already than a mindfulness that unconsciously, automatically, out of habit, regards that touch as the meeting of materials—the foot and the earth.

There's always a conceptual framework, there's always a logos, there's always a way of looking when there's any experience, apart from the so-called experience of the unfabricated. It's a very different kind of thing, where there is no time, no knowing of subject or object. There's always a conceptual framework, there's always a logos, which creates a way of looking, which is part of the way of looking, which, if you like, is part of determining the experience—not just the interpretation, the hermeneutics of this experience, but the experience itself is part of fabricating.

So when I'm talking now about conceptual framework and logos or idea—and I'll probably use those words interchangeably—I'm talking about something that we want to be translatable, incorporatable into a way of looking, so that it's fruitful, so that it's fertile, so that it opens up our perception. We're talking about something that we live in our experience.

There's always, as I will come back to—I've said before in other talks and I'll come back to—there's always a metaphysics. There's always some belief about what's real, and there's always some conceptuality there. And we actually want that to come... we want to be able to employ different conceptual frames that are actually fertile, that give rise to and open up our experience, and that we can actually embody in our life.

Now, for me, I would say—and you'll have to see how much you feel the same way—if we're interested in building a conceptual framework, opening one up, discovering, creating a conceptual framework in the Dharma and in relation to Eros and soul-making, then it's going to need to be able to do quite a lot, or support quite a lot, the way I see it right now.

It's going to need to account for quite a few things, quite a few aspects of experience, and it's going to have to include and not ignore quite a few things. It's going to need to make sense of quite a few things in our experience. It's going to need to give a vital place to and a purpose to quite a few things, and also connect those things. So it needs to account for, include and not ignore, make sense of, give vital place and purpose to, and connect quite a few different elements of our experience.

One is this whole observation that we have of lessening fabrication—that whole spectrum of fabrication that we can discover in meditation. It's not random. It's not just that things disappear because they're impermanent. We actually see there's a whole spectrum, more or less fabricated, all the way down to no fabrication at all, no experience. Dependent. We need to understand the dependent origination there and what that's dependent on—conceptuality and identification and avidya, clinging. We talked about this all before. But that fact... somehow I need to account for it and include it. I can't just skip over that.

And coming out of that observable spectrum of fabrication, its relationship with, or its dependent arising—either coming out of that or some other way—the emptiness of all things, all things without question. Not the aggregates, or rather, not leaving anything not empty, not leaving the aggregates, the process, the time, the big awareness, being, materiality, atoms, electrons, subatomic particles—emptiness of all, all, all: space, time, and all of that. Somehow this to me has to be included.

If we don't, then something remains not empty and we start building a whole structure on that assumption of reality which is relatively easily disproved in one way or another. And of course that's what sometimes happens, either consciously, or the person doesn't even realize that they're assuming the reality of this or that, assuming the non-emptiness of this or that. And they're just saying, "Yes, yes, yes, emptiness, of course," but there's some basis in reality there, and everything is coming out of that as a foundation, of this real thing, whatever it is—materiality, and then you've got a neuroscience-based dharma, or atomistic process, or whatever it is.

So fabrication, the spectrum of fabrication, dependent arising, the emptiness of absolutely everything. And that also for me, the whole opening up of the idea of ways of looking, the plurality, the legitimacy of a whole manifold range of ways of looking. Not because we want to be nice guys. I don't actually think I'm a nice guy. That's not the reason. I'm not just trying to be, you know, not get into an argument with

someone, so I just say everyone's way of looking is fine. That's actually not what I'm saying, and that's not the reason. It's coming out of emptiness. It's going deeply into fabrication, very deeply, and seeing the emptiness of all things, seeing what we are left with. We are left with a range, an option of ways of looking, the diversity, the flexibility of ways of looking.

And somehow in all that, I also need to account for, make sense of, and give purpose to the whole, and really structure the whole relationship of the fabricated with the unfabricated. And then where does this thing that people call mindfulness or bare attention fit into that?

So somehow my conceptual framework has to, as I said, account for and include all this. I can't just ignore that spectrum of fabrication. I can't forget that everything is empty. Yes?

So all of that, but then also, again, what the conceptual framework that to me would really be healthy and relatively robust and beauty-making and supportive needs also to account for, include, make sense of, give vital place and purpose to, and connect all of these with the other ideas.

So also, images and the imaginal—and what does that mean? Are we just going to discount the whole imaginative faculty that human beings have? The noticing of the fact that our life is full of fantasy anyway. The whole movement of soul-making. And again, are we just going to ignore it? Pretend that that's not something that is part of our existence to more or less degrees for different human beings at different times? It already exists, all this. Are we going to dismiss it? Are we going to ignore it? Or actually, are we going to construct and discover a conceptual framework that can hold all this together and give it life?

And again, part of that, of course, is eros and desire and sexuality. Again, are we just sort of chopping that stuff off or over-simplistically reducing it or dismissing it or labeling it in too reductive or not subtle enough ways?

And body—are we limiting what body is to us and can be to us? Do we just have a sort of materialist reductionist view of body, or do we see it only through the lens of the way we've been taught the four foundations of mindfulness in the first foundation? How much embodiment has been left out of, until quite recently, and even then it's only just hardly made any inroads—but how much that has been left out of Western philosophy and psychology, and what the body is and what the body can be for us, to us. Where there is soul-making, where there's this expansion of psyche-logos, the body too will be drawn into that. I'll come back to this.

So somehow our conceptual framework has to actually include body and give more place to body, more purpose to body, different accounts of body, and then of course also just the whole of the human being. And again, what is our conceptual framework saying about what a human being is? Because that too with soul-making will be expanded, broadened, deepened, given dimension. Am I just sticking it into, again, a kind of evolutionary accident emerging from the primal swamp after long enough time by the vagaries of

biochemistry? Or the human being is just what secular modernism says the human being is?

And related to that, of course, relationships. What are human relationships? How does my conceptual framework allow the growth and the expansion, the widening and deepening of the sense and the concept of what my human relationships are? Or again, am I just kind of putting it into some modernist secular box or whatever it is?

Can the whole conceptual framework support opening the relationship with death? How often the conversation about death and relationship with it seems so sort of flatly polarized. After death, what will happen after death? Is there anything after death? And it revolves around rebirth or heaven or hell or this state or dissolving into oneness or whatever. What are you now? Never mind what you will be or what will happen. What is happening now?

If I see that flatly, if I'm limited in what I actually sense and see happening now, if my soul's looking and sensing of this existence now is limited—what is this? What is even this now? What is time? All of that, when that gets limited, then it just becomes "after death, after death." Will it be just extinction? Or is it extinction? No, it's not. It's a flat, polarized, kind of naive and unhelpful argument.

A friend's mother is dying. The friend said she doesn't believe in something better than what she has on earth. As if that's the only way of looking at it. What do you have on earth? How is time woven into all this? And is there a way of—some people respond to death, "Oh well, who dies? No one dies because there's no self." It's just a process that then disbands, or whatever. There was no self, so death is okay. Or you just kind of dissolve into the universal being, or the universal Brahman, or whatever it is, or dissolve into God, or whatever.

Is there, you know, all that, or someone says no, it's just—all that's rubbish, it's just a tragedy. It's just an actual tragedy. Here was this wonderful human being and now they're just gone and there's nothing but unremitting sort of loss about death.

Is there a way, are there ways of relating to death that include all those possibilities but add the whole dimension of the self? The self is not either just dismissed—"No one dies. Who dies? No one dies because there is no one, because there's no self"—just a simplistic answer. Or the self just gets dissolved back into sort of a universal, amorphous, unparticularized being.

Or is there a relationship with death, not bound by time, not bound by any idea about something lasting or what will happen later or anything like that in time after death, that actually still has a place for the self, a soul place for the self?

So all of this—our conceptual framework has to be able to open up, for me, has to be able to open up and support quite a lot more than is often the case in relation to all these aspects of our existence.

And of course, in relation to the earth and the environment, how desperately, desperately we are in need

of a new relationship, a new conception, a new perception—a new cosmology, really. Something that can offer, you know, a support, real respect, real openness in regard to the earth, the environment, the cosmos, but also the senses.

Again, how are we seeing the senses? How are we conceiving of the senses? And again, some interpretations of Buddha-dharma, it's as if the senses can be these sort of basic instruments that reveal bare attention. Other versions of dharma have the senses as something you're trying to get rid of ultimately in some kind of transcendent dissolution.

But the earth, the environment, the cosmos, the senses, the beauty—beauties. Can our conceptual framework open up the possibilities for beauty, for discovering and creating beauty? How does our notion of the dharma support or inhibit that?

And our conceptual framework also needs, of course, to do all this—account for, make sense of, give place and purpose to, connect different aspects—and our dharma practices? How does all that connect? The ones that we've maybe learned and new ones that we can discover for ourselves, and how do they all fit together?

And psychology. Again, it's a sense of what's taken as truth in psychology—the psychology of a person or child development. What's the whole notion of, or rather the whole possibilities of psychology? Because that too must expand if the eros-psyche-logos dynamic expands. Psyche-logos—the logos needs to expand.

And, you know, I've said many times before, the whole sense of sacredness, and again the range of that, and this whole notion of divinity. And what might that mean? Or what can that mean? Or how can that open up and become something that's supported and fertile? And if we talk about divinity again, how does the conceptual framework relate to and conceive of divinity?

The whole relationship of, say, the spectrum of fabrication with the fact—tied in with that—that our perception can seem more or less substantial with the refinement and moving up and down of that spectrum of fabrication. And do we just associate that with "less substantial, more refined, more ethereal is somehow more divine"? Is that how we relate there? Or is there some other way that actually gives as much divinity to both ends of that spectrum? Are there other ways of conceiving that support a kind of non-hierarchicalized notion of divinity, of the range, of the spectrum of what divinity can be and how we can sense it?

So the notion of dimensionality, I've said, is related to divinity. And somehow, what's the conceptual framework in relation to the sense of dimensionality we discover in our experience as we pay attention, as we experiment? There's always more dimensionality. Maybe that's tied in with the whole sense of divinity—there's always more, the unfathomability of divinity. But in "always more," it's not necessarily that the more is closer to divinity, just because it's more and I haven't fathomed it yet.

So there's a lot here that a conceptual framework needs to kind of take account of, include, not ignore,

make sense of, give place and purpose to, and kind of stitch together in a supportive framework. All that, for me, I would say. And these, for me—again, maybe you agree, maybe you don't—but these are important things. These things matter to us. Matter deeply. They make a big difference—the conceptual framework and the concepts and the beliefs about and assumptions about all this stuff, perceptions of all this stuff.

Now another aspect of all this that's for me a requirement is we need to acknowledge, as I've already pointed out, not just that concept and percept, conceptual framework and experience, are mutually dependently originated. In other words, where there's concept, there is experience, and that concept is part of fabricating that experience, shaping, determining that experience, giving rise to that experience.

And also, of course, the concepts we have are formed by experience. There's a mutual dependent origination there—to some extent. But in addition to that, not just that, but in addition to that, both idea, concept, logos, conceptual framework, and experience are situated. They are contextually conditioned.

So that history and society, ideas and logoi, conceptual frameworks and experience, perceptions, appearances—whatever you want to call those three—history, society, ideas, and experience are mutually conditioning. Sometimes they're hardly separable. In other words, ideas emerge in history and are borrowed from history. We inherit certain ideas from history. Ideas also shape history. And both of those shape our experience. And of course, experiences emerge and they become ideas and shape history that way. There's a mutual conditioning between all three.

So what that means in relationship to conceiving of a conceptual framework that's supportive to soul-making and eros and everything that we're talking about is that we can't claim—it would be silly to claim—a kind of ahistoricality. Like, we are now talking about some truth, this conceptual framework is a truth that's ahistorical, it's transcendent of all history, it's not situated in this culture, in this time, with this historical influx of ideas and all the rest of it. It's totally contextual. So we somehow need to admit that and actually give relevance and place to that, and maybe even purpose to that—which hopefully is something I'll come back to.

So for example, in the story that I related of the yogini on retreat the other day and her need for the earth and the woods to touch and address and cherish her particularities, her self, her particular self, her unique self—in other words, in the way that we're speaking about, for her what was needed there was her self, in its particularity, in its uniqueness, to be more fully included and involved in the imaginal constellation, so that there was a balance there in the expanding soul-making dynamic of psyche-logos, and also so that the self, or as part of that, the self became an erotic image, either for the self, or in this case for the object of the image reciprocally.

So her need for that, someone could say, "But surely that's just a creation, a fabrication demanded now or kind of conditioned or even forced by the rise of the modernist self, which was a self, a sense of self that didn't exist before." In other words, go back far enough in history, read whatever documents we have, get

a sense—and it's like, it's hard to really believe that the sense of self that we so much take for granted now in modernity, in the time of modernity, in Western culture, is the same kind of sense of self of the people that the Buddha was talking to.

You simply do not get the same sense of complexity or difficulty in regard to certain psychological interiorities that we now have that we absolutely take for granted and we feel viscerally—this is myself and this is important. Or perhaps even in the Old Testament as well. You know, it's just, as well as the Pali Canon, it's like this modernist self is—quite a few philosophers have pointed out—it's a creation, it's a construction, it's not a so-to-speak independently existing reality.

It's not to say some sense of self will always be there, but the actual sense of self and the complex interior reality, a rise of psychological self in this kind of—that seems to exist in some kind of independent way, etc., that we feel so normally nowadays—is a creation of modernism, of Western modernism.

And were it not for that creation, this person is pointing out, then there's no need for the creation of an imaginal perception of the earth being in love with me, as felt as a modernist self. There's a double construction there.

To which I would say, yes, absolutely, there's a double construction. There's a double construction there. Soul-making, eros, psyche-logos creates as much as it discovers. So yes, fabrication, yes, construction. But that doesn't make it certainly less soul-making.

So there's a whole soul-making process here that we could actually say includes history, includes the ideas that are bequeathed to us. So the modernist self is, to a certain extent, a soul-making construction—historically emergent, culturally contingent, all of that. It's a soul-making construction, and then it demands—its logos begins to break and doesn't support enough eros, doesn't support enough soul-making—demands another construction. That whole historical movement could be regarded as soul-making. I'm going to come back to this.

But yes, acknowledging that it's a creation, a construction, a fabrication, doesn't make it less soul-making. On the contrary. It doesn't make it less divine either in the way that I would be talking about divinity, and doesn't even make it less real—because you would have to ask, compared to what? Show me something that is not fabricated. Show me something that's not fabricated. So it's fabricated, therefore it's not real—compared to what?

To stay a while with this point of the mutual conditioning of history, society, ideas, logos, conceptual framework, and experience, perception, appearance—I wonder how many of you have had this experience that I've had, and I don't think it's that uncommon. Perhaps you're with a relative or a loved one, someone who you love deeply. And perhaps they're ill, for example.

And perhaps you massaged their feet or held their feet or somehow held something of their body. Perhaps they were dying. And somehow in the holding and in the love and in the erotic love—and I don't just mean

sexual love—in the erotic love there, this person's feet, this loved one's feet, became holy.

Maybe even became, somehow, in the perception there, in the imaginal perception, they gained a dimensionality or dimensionalities of holiness. Maybe they even became Jesus' feet—the body, the feet of the Christ, perhaps the crucified Christ. And wrapped up in that kind of experience, there's something sacred about this person, this person I love, their particularity, their body, something sacred, and something sacred about Christ or Jesus, and something sacred about this kind of spreading from that to all bodies, and perhaps in cosmopoiesis as well. So there's some degree of that movement happening.

Now you could say, of course, if it is, let's say, the sense of touching Jesus' feet there, how rich that is. Some people, this will not resonate with at all, but for a lot of people in our culture, and not just people who have Christian backgrounds, who were raised Christian, that image has such a richness and a poignancy and a beauty and a poetry to it.

So you could say, "Oh sure, but you're having that experience because you're just kind of recalling a cultural icon that you've been fed or conditioned from the culture, from your background, from your family, whatever." And we say, "Yeah, sure, sure, sure. That's part of what's going on." We are fed that image and it's worked its way into the collective psyche. It might actually be almost eroded now at this point in history, but still, it's there. So yeah, sure, acknowledge that.

And both now and even originally in the actual historic occurrence of Jesus' crucifixion and all that with the apostles and the twelve disciples who became the apostles—so both now, in this experience of your loved one's feet, and in the original—could it also be that both you, in this experience, and Mary or whoever it was, Joseph of Arimathea and these people, were tapping into an archetype that kind of pre-existed Jesus? An archetype of the Christ and the martyred one and everything that's wrapped up in there about death and divinity and an exceptionally soul-making, beautiful love.

So there's a tapping into an archetype, we could say that, a kind of primordial archetype in the Jungian sense. Sure, so that could be both. And it could be that in the original experience historically in the New Testament with Mary and then Paul coming with his kind of theology of the body of Christ—all that was exactly the movement of erotic love stimulating, fertilizing, opening up, widening and deepening and giving dimension and divinity to what it came into contact with as the eros-psyche-logos dynamic was stimulated and fertilized.

In other words, there's this eros to this person. Paul, I don't think, ever met Jesus, but maybe it was Mary and Paul as Jesus' person became image for Paul, and there was an erotic connection there for Mary and for the others. The erotic connection to this person of Jesus fertilized and deepened and widened the soul-making and thus the perception of the body of Jesus and other bodies related to his and the self and the cosmos and all of that.

And out of that, a theology was woven—I mean, via Paul and all that, St. Paul. And this theology somehow

preserved Jesus' uniqueness, his uniqueness, and his person, and somehow connected flesh and divinity. And in some theologies, you know, spills over into a cosmology of the cosmic Christ and the whole kind of divine nature of the universe.

So in this third possibility, we're not just tapping into a kind of pre-existing primordial archetype, but the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, as it expands, is actually creating an archetype. Creating a cosmopoiesis, creating a theology. Maybe that was what was going on both historically, at the time of Jesus, and also now.

The eros-psyche-logos, it will tend to divinize. And of course, what happened back then, 2,000 years ago, was historically conditioned, the kind of logos that came out of that. You can also, of course, trace it to the Old Testament and other ideas that were around, and Greek ideas. But you can't escape cosmology, and partly because you can't escape from history and society. Cosmology that was historically around back then, and the kind of messianism and Judaism and all that—of course that informed, but there was also something else happening.

You could say that the eros-psyche-logos dynamic was doing what it does and how it will transubstantiate things. We touched on this in the last retreat. The idea that you can get away from any kind of cosmology that's in the present culture, get away from history and society—I'm going to come back to this—that is highly questionable.

Or, again, as a third example, the idea, the conceptual framework, or the logos of a cosmic or divine eros. That idea that we've touched on, it will seed, it will feed and support—again, think of that orchard image of the tree—it will seed and support the actual sense, the perception, the experience of that, of a cosmic and divine eros.

The idea supports, seeds and supports the experience—intrapsychically, through intrapsychic image, and then, inevitably, through the perception of the world, if I don't get in the way of that. And the reverse. This idea of a cosmic or divine eros that somehow I'm mirroring, or that's permeating the cosmos—all these different ideas, that image, if you like, or that mythos, will emerge from and be seeded by both historically, I would say, but certainly now in practice. You can see it also in how something opens an experience, and then a little while later you read something and discover that someone had this idea that corresponds to your experience—someone had it long ago.

Both historically and now, the idea or the mythos emerges from experience and perception opening in mystical experience and in imaginal perception, and in the cosmic eros that comes from that. The eros-psyche-logos dynamic is operating—everything is becoming, is gaining dimension, and thus divinized. The divinity comes with the dimensionality. So eventually, as I've said before, even the eros gets given dimensionality and divinized and expanded. There's a sense—there's an actual, I'm not even thinking at first, but just from letting, following the mystical and imaginal perceptions, letting, not getting in the way—eventually eros appears divine.

And then that gives me the idea: oh, this is God's eros. I'm participating in it, I'm mirroring it. This eros that I have, this love that I have, echoes, mirrors, has roots in divine eros.

So we acknowledge—or rather, any conceptual framework that I would like to be involved with, or that I could feel I could get behind, needs to acknowledge that it's not some kind of ultimate truth. It's not depicting some way things really are in some independent way, nor is it some ultimately true kind of grand theory, conceptual framework of everything that's completely ahistorical. So it needs to acknowledge all that—it's not ultimate truth, and it's not completely ahistorical.

But at the same time, it needs to recognize, as I said before, there's always a way of looking, and included in the way of looking is the conceptual framework—a logos is operating, always, when there's experience. And that way of looking, and that conceptual framework, will give rise to experience, shape, determine, and actually give rise to experience. And of course the experiences we have shape and inform the conceptual framework and the ways of looking. But it's not possible to be without a conceptual framework or a way of looking. And if you don't know that, find that out. Know that that's true. So somehow we need to recognize that—that needs to be included.

And we need, with all this, a conceptual framework that supports soul-making. Let me run through a list and then go back through them more slowly.

First, we need a conceptual framework that supports soul-making. Second, we need a logos, a conceptual framework that supports the fertility and widening of our experience and understanding. Third, related to that, we need to make sure that we're not engaging in epistemicide. I only learned that word the other day, but I was thinking along similar lines—I'll come back to this. Epistemicide: the killing, the erasure, or the dismissal of ways of knowing. That we're not forcibly reducing to some kind of dogma, that there's just one way of looking that's valid, and that way of looking reveals the true reality of things.

Often that is what happens in secular modernity—there's actually a kind of monotheism, a secular modernist monotheism in terms of ontology (what is real, what's not real), epistemology (what are the valid ways of knowing and what are the not valid ways of knowing), and cosmology (what kind of world we live in, what is the nature of the world we live in). And so shrinking that down to: there's just one way of looking—you can call it mindfulness or science or whatever you want to call it—and that reveals the reality of things. It's actually a kind of monotheism, whether it's religious or secular. It goes with modernism, actually. I'll come back to this.

Fifth, we need to somehow incorporate—this conceptual framework needs to incorporate dependent origination, ways of looking, principally the emptiness of things. And sixth, related to what I said before, is some conceptual framework that actually opens the ways of knowing, embodied ways of knowing, without a prescribed limit. Go back to what I said before—this is a variation of what I said before—but how fertile is it? Am I putting a limit? And are there ways of knowing that are not just mental, rational, disembodied?

Can the conceptual framework, as I said, include the idea that the conceptual framework breaks, and that the breaking of the vessels is in some way included in the very conceptual framework, in the larger conceptual framework? And also what I said much earlier in the retreat—that we acknowledge and live with and integrate the idea that we can never fully understand eros, either because we say it's divine and unfathomable, or because of the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, expanding always the nature of eros itself, the perception, the concept of eros itself.

Somehow, all of those need to get integrated into our conceptual framework.

Thank you for listening.

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