Refractions: Of Body, Sensuality, and Sexuality (Part 3)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 1:13:00

To say in different words something I think I've said before, perhaps on a few different occasions: It's important, I feel, to question and to be mindful and to be on the lookout for our own shadow. As we proceed on our path, it's very easy to look at someone else's path, some other tradition, and see their shadow, their weak spots, their unexamined areas, their blind spots, places where they're out of balance. More relevant, more important, is to look at our own shadow and the shadows of our own tradition and our own trajectory and our own path-making.

I'm using the word shadow here probably in a slightly different way than you might have grown accustomed to it. I'm using it in the sense that any time we throw light on something, anytime any object or event or thing is illuminated by a light, by consciousness, by exploration—so anytime a light illuminates something—that thing, or that whole process of the light and the thing, casts a shadow. Any time we open something up to questioning, we illuminate it, bring consciousness to bear, look at it from different perspectives. All this creates shadow. Shadow is not just the place rejected by trauma or something in the psyche. It's actually what happens any time consciousness brings itself to bear, so to speak, or is put in relationship with anything. Light and an object causes a shadow—if you think just about the physics of it.

In other words, insights illuminate, but they also cast a shadow—a shadow of insight. Each insight, each perspective that insight brings, or each insight that is a perspective, casts a particular shadow, or a shadow in a particular direction, has a way of shadowing in a corresponding direction to the insight. Imagine here's the light of insight shining from a particular direction on an object—a stone, a tree, an animal. There's then a shadow behind that stone, tree, animal in relationship to where the light is coming from. It's just how light and shadow works. It's similar with insight.

We can talk about the shadow of particular perspectives, or the shadows of particular insights. The whole Four Noble Truths is a kind of insight system, a perspective, a set of insights, if you like, and it casts a lot of light, a lot of illumination, but it has a shadow to it, or shadows to it, blind spots—things that by virtue of that very light that's shining from a certain direction are then cast into darkness.

The whole movement, or just the insight of not-self, no-self—fantastic insight, really liberating—will cast a particular kind of shadow in relationship to the self. Or the movement of renunciation. Or the whole movement to simplifying. It can be so helpful to simplify: just papañca, proliferation, let go. But this brings

a certain blindness, a certain blind spot in a certain corresponding or corollary or opposite direction. What's the shadow of simplism? What's the shadow of the teachings of no-self? What's even the shadow of the Four Noble Truths?

This is important. I mean it in that sense, in a very wide sense. For me, wherever we are, whatever we're opening up, whatever we're exploring, however we're moving, there's this possibility of shadow, shadows, and there's an ongoing kind of exploration there. It won't ever end. We don't ever get to the end of shadow, so to speak. It's created by the very process of consciousness itself. So this is important to know and important to include in our ongoing journey.

In relation to what we just finished in the last part of the talk—elaborating on and describing this emergence of sexuality as a sort of area of delineation that then became interesting and became filled out and became complicated and added a new complexity to the self and the notion and the felt sense of self—and that whole movement, historical movement that Foucault was tracing and we were talking about in different ways, elaborating on and adding to what he said: we said this proliferation of delineation, this increase in complexity, increase in the psychic interiority of the self and the whole sense of what the self is, that that proliferation is a double-edged sword. We have to be careful with that.

We can see that it is a movement of soul-making, a movement of this expansion, widening, deepening, complicating, enriching—the eros psychē logos, the dynamic of soul-making, and those three facets kind of do to each other or involve each other. It can also be a snag, a snare, a trap, a net of entanglement for ego. So it's a double-edged sword.

Now in terms of shadow, what I mean is that it may be easy to look at all this from what we could call the perspective of a kind of lazy Buddha-dharma, the response of a lazy Buddha-dharma. One could sit here and just in a very relaxed way, very almost lazy and sloppy, say: "Proliferation. You see, that's papañca, that's exactly the translation of papañca—proliferation. Sex, these things bring dukkha. They only bring dukkha. Let go."

Let go. Be simple. Let go of all this business about self. Let go of all these delineations. Let go of all this exploration of the complexities of sexuality and all that. Let go. Be simple. So shrug it off.

And basically there is this shrugging off and the seduction there of the simplism, the seduction of the promise of peace, but the seduction also of simplicity. And really the encouragement is not to engage. Don't engage with the process of soul-making and the complexities of soul-making, which will involve a rub, which will sometimes involve a rupturing of vessels, as we've said, the breaking of the vessels, which will involve friction and heat and confusion at times and expansion and stretching of the soul, of the vision, of the concept.

So one of the shadows of Buddha-Dharma—and it almost comes with the package of the Four Noble Truths, and what I was referring to as the medical model and this emphasis on peace and letting go—so

it's a treasure, but it comes with a shadow. And part, especially nowadays, part of that shadow is this what I call simplism and the seduction of simplism and the kind of non-engagement.

What will happen if we adopt that approach, if we sit back in that kind of lazy posture there, what I'm calling a lazy Buddha-Dharma, then there will not be, there cannot be the soul-making with respect to self and individuality. And personhood and persona and these things that we've touched on in the past, self as a whole, direction, avenue, doorway, movement and manifestation of soul-making just cannot happen. Nor sex, nor sexuality.

Why? Because we've just gone back to the simplism and shrugging it off and calling it all just papañca, proliferation, and just self equals a bad word. Didn't the Buddha say there's no self?

And in that, one is not recognizing, if one adopts such a posture, one is not recognizing something we touched on right at the beginning of the retreat, and we spent a lot of time expanding, elaborating on that. The soul-making process, the soul-making dynamic, the *eros-psyche-logos* dynamic, involves and works by—in part works by—making delineations.

Delineations become clear to the perception of the sensitive soul, of the sensibility that is refined through eros, through interest, through arousal, through contact and desiring more contact, emotional sensitivity, perceptual sensitivity, sensual sensitivity, mental sensitivities and delineations of the concepts.

We can call it papañca and proliferation, and yes, there's all kinds of dangers involved in it, as we're pointing out, but it is also intrinsic, for the most part, to the soul-making dynamic.

And even when one moves—I can't remember if I said this—but even when one moves towards the simplifying of less fabrication, states of oneness, jhāna, and moves on that trajectory of lessening fabrication towards the unfabricated, there is still a very subtle and important delineation making going on, according to what? According to the Four Noble Truths. Where's the suffering? Where's the release from suffering? What is involved in supporting suffering, in what we're calling clinging, and everything, all the subtlety of what's involved in clinging, and letting go of that, all these subtle delineations are involved in that particular movement of soul-making towards the unfabricated, towards the different levels of oneness.

But generally speaking, adopting that as a kind of lazy Buddha-Dharma posture or stance in response to all this and the complexity and the demands, really, of all that, what the soul is being called to, what the soul is calling us to in relationship with sexuality, in relationship with sexuality and body, and also in relationship with self, self-notion, self-construct, self-view, self-images—to adopt that lazy posture would be not to recognize the intrinsicness of delineation making, not to rise to that challenge, not to meet it, not to open it, not to be bothered, really.

So the soul-making dynamic involves delineation making of all kinds, and more subtle and more complex delineation making, not as some kind of sort of anally retentive accountant approach, categorization

process and boxing everything into neat boxes and being too picky about that. But it includes that.

And the soul-making process will include and will affect the sense of self, the view of self, the idea, the concept of self. The sense of other, the view of other, the idea and the concept of other and of eros. So all this, it's included. We can shrug it off, try and be simple, decide not to engage, criticize it with certain Dharma by labeling it with Dharma concepts of papañca and self, defilement and all that. But the soul-making process will involve delineations and will include and affect how we view, sense and think of self, other and eros, which means sexuality as well, as a part of eros, as a dimension or a strand of eros.

You know, in recent years there's a growing movement of opening up and making more visible and opening up for discussion and questioning not just the possibility of sexual orientation and the definitions and what's allowable in terms of sexual orientation, but also in terms of gender definitions and delineations, and a kind of refusal to be limited by the sort of two possibilities given to us, male, female, that are handed to us, if you like, seemingly, obviously. So there's a possibility of being polygendered, if you like, or both, or neither, or something completely different.

This whole movement of opening those discourses up around sexual orientation, around gender, delineations and definitions, identities, opening it up, questioning, talking about, and refusing to be nailed into just two delineations there—I wonder whether that whole movement of opening that's happening more and more I think in recent years, if that could also be seen as a soul-making movement.

It's the movement of your *psyche-logos* doing exactly what it tends to do. And that can be an individual movement, of course, for the individual in relationship to those areas and those delineations. The soul making comes into contact with them and it doesn't fit. It wants more. The vessels need to be broken. And it can also be a cultural movement. Soul making can happen on a cultural level as well.

So I wonder if that's one way of seeing what's going on there, quite aside from all the political issues there. There could be really at heart there a soul-making movement.

In imaginal work, as I've mentioned before, when I remain open to the imaginal and allow the mundus imaginalis—the imaginal realm—to receive me and lead me without constraint, the whole restriction of gender simply doesn't apply. One may embody the gender typically associated with oneself, or the opposite gender—though even thinking in terms of "opposites" reduces the vast spectrum to merely a binary male-female possibility. One could be hermaphrodite, could be non-gendered, or might transcend even the constraints of biological and physical actualities.

The imaginal eroticism one witnesses or participates in may be heterosexual or homoerotic, may not involve human beings at all, or may involve partly human beings. As I've said before, one might be penetrating or penetrated in ways that don't correspond to biological actualities. The imaginal realm remains radically open in this way.

And as with all imaginal practice, one of the essential questions becomes: what wants to manifest in actual

life, in lived experience, and how? Among all these imaginal possibilities, some may require no manifestation or expression in daily life whatsoever. Some need manifestation that isn't obviously related at first glance to the original image. Others call for more direct, recognizable forms of expression.

The eros-psyche-logos dynamic—the soul-making dynamic—as we mentioned almost from the beginning, will eventually open everything up. More precisely, it tends toward opening more and more of our experience, more and more facets of being. This represents its natural inclination because of how it fundamentally operates. Included in this opening is the body itself: what the body means to us, how it appears to us, how we feel and sense it, how we think about and conceive of it. This opening up of the body through the soul-making process becomes inevitable—it must be included.

This opening happens in very obvious ways and also in much less obvious ways. Already we've touched on some of this, and it forms part of what we're presenting and teaching here. Simply by beginning with what we call the phenomenological approach—attending to the actual experience of body—we discover what we term the energy body. Just by adopting this phenomenological stance and backing away from rigid ideation about what body is according to whatever dogma we've been indoctrinated with—whether modern secular materialism, scientific reductionism, or some religious worldview—just by giving a bit more space from these conceptual strangleholds, the sense of the energy body begins to become clear.

As we play with this perception through different ways of looking, experimenting within our phenomenological approach with various modes of attention, tuning in differently and bringing sensitivity and curiosity to this experience of the energy body, the very range of energy body experience starts to open. Already, through this basic, simple approach and exploration, there is an opening of what the body is to us and what our experience and idea of the body encompasses.

But at some point, wrapped up with this or in addition to it, the body can also become image. We realize there are imaginal dimensions to our perception of the body. This can happen both directly and indirectly. The body—our own body, a lover's body, or someone else's body—can become the erotic object for us, included in their personhood or simply as body per se. The body becomes the erotically beloved other. In this way, the body gains imaginal dimension directly through erotic relationship.

Or something else serves as the erotic beloved, and there's a spilling over, an expansion of soul-making sensibilities that comes to include and involve the perception of the body, perhaps through cosmopoiesis. We realize, as we do with all perception, that imaginal threads and imaginal dimensions are woven through our perception of the world, of body, of everything. We can speak of imaginal body just as we speak of imaginal earth—the imaginal perception of body, the imaginal perception of earth.

But whether directly or indirectly, the body in the soul-making process—in being included, wrapped up in, drawn into, involved in this soul-making gestation, digestion, vortex, whirlwind—becomes more than it was yesterday, more than it was last year, more than it was to us before. The body becomes more, like everything else included in the soul-making process. It gains dimensionality, beauty, sacredness,

multifacetedness, complication. The body becomes more.

It becomes alive in ways beyond what we typically consider in our usual, culturally given and sanctioned ways of thinking about and perceiving the body. Where we normally think of body as either alive or dead in an obviously biological sense, it becomes alive in other ways, becomes more. It's given dimensionality and multifacetedness that it didn't possess before.

This "moreness"—this gaining more, being given more, having more discovered within the body—happens in two ways I'd like to delineate. First, the body as object: the object of my sensing, my perception, my vision, touch, smell, taste, hearing. Also the object of my thought and of my imaginal perception. All of these are interconnected, of course. But the body as object becomes more, becomes more alive, is given dimensionality.

Second, the body as subject—meaning the body as a kind of place, a gathering place or locus for ways of knowing. Subject is what knows, as opposed to object, which is what is known.

Body as locus of ways of knowing. And those ways of knowing, again, they're more than I knew yesterday. They may be new to me as an individual. This body, and through the body, through the soul-making process, through the erotic imaginal ways of knowing, are open to me that opened to me in that process that I hadn't known before, that I wasn't familiar with before. All ways of knowing that are new to the culture.

So it might be that those ways of knowing were known to perhaps ancient cultures or certain indigenous cultures in this or that place in the world, but they might be new to this culture, or they might be new to all cultures. But again, because of the soul-making process, there is not this contraction of ways of knowing in some kind of dogma. Only this way of knowing and that way of knowing are legitimate. Everything else is a delusion, a projection, a fantasy in the bad sense, immature wish fulfillment, whatever, confusion and ignorance.

There is not that epistemicide and epistemic cleansing that we spoke of before. Rather, there is an opening of epistemic potential. The body becomes more as both object of sense, thought, image, and as locus of ways of knowing, potential ways of knowing.

We'll return to this. But already, previously on this course and on other courses, we've presented things and tried to open up the sense of the body and what the body is. For example, with the teachings on the energy body and our trying to stress and insist on an inclusion of the whole spectrum of perceived substantiality of the body.

In other words, if we talk about energy body, it can be extremely refined—almost like you could put your hand through the body, or it's just light, or sometimes even beyond that, it's just empty space—all the way down to really dense, solid perception of materiality. I'm saying all of that spectrum is included in what we're calling the energy body. Sometimes I regret the way I name things—I feel like I could have chosen

better words, but anyway, it's there now. Including all of the spectrum, really getting familiarity with that whole range and everything in between.

Sometimes this encouragement to do that is a matter of kind of rebalancing where there's too much tendency one way or another. For instance, occasionally there are people who keep tending just towards the very sort of airy, more refined, less substantial sense of the body, and it would be good for them to dwell a bit more, have equal range and play in the more solid, more densely material, heavy sense of the body.

But for me, the encouragement to have that whole spectrum there is really not only for the sake of so-called psychological health or psychological balance. Yes, that's important sometimes, but really for me the more important thing is for the soul-making. Because the Eros-Psyche-Logos dynamic wants, in its natural inclination, to open in all directions and include everything that it can possibly come in contact with. It wants to have all that spectrum. It wants to inhabit and fill out and sacralize all that spectrum.

Part of what it wants and what it achieves by doing that, and for me part of the whole purpose of all this teaching, all this work, is to widen our senses of the sacred and, if you like, of the divine—if you're okay with that language—widen our senses of the sacred, so that the sacred is not just limited to the ethereal, the insubstantial, the white light. It's also right there. The divinity is right there, as we've touched on before, in the density, in the solidity, in the so-called darkness of matter.

We can look at different cultures, whether they're spiritual cultures or the wider culture, wider Western modernist culture, and ask: what's the typical sort of leaning here? In the wider culture, it's certainly towards density. Probably very few people in the wider culture have regular experience of a sort of light body or anything like that, and would probably get quite alarmed if suddenly they did have that—that's my guess.

Conversely, there might be certain traditions of spiritual teaching and practice where they emphasize much more the light body and almost put down the more dense experiences. But what I think we're interested in is both—both the dense ends and the more refined, more insubstantial, more ethereal ends. Everything in between is open to be filled with the erotic imaginal, seen through the erotic imaginal, filled with soul and soul-making and thus sacralized. And one is familiar with that whole range of experience.

We've talked about that in terms of opening up the body. We've also drawn attention to, again with the way we're talking about the energy body, that the felt sense of the space that the body is or occupies is larger, potentially, phenomenologically. It's actually larger than what is obvious to the visual eye or what is obviously physically measurable. In other words, the sense of the energy body can extend either a little bit beyond the visible, physically measurable physical body, or actually quite a bit.

But the space of the body is also something, or the perceived and conceived space of the body is also something that we have expanded in the way that we've been presenting these teachings. Soul-making

tends to include and involve more of the body space. Soul-making, again, is part of the whole Eros-Psyche-Logos tendency of expansion, isn't it? But when there is a movement of soul-making, when there's soul-making in process, it will tend to expand, to include, to involve more of the body space, or the body space, the center of the body space, to have more area to it.

In fact, in our kind of definition of what imaginal practice or mindfulness of images involves, if you remember, it involves, by definition, attention to the whole energy body, mindfulness of the whole energy body. We're including that in what soul-making is, what imaginal practice is, in the way that we're talking about it. And if it's not there, it's something that one can open towards or encourage or lean towards or support in order to give good ground to the soul-making process.

Actually, in connection with that, if we refer back to what we were talking about yesterday with regard to soul-making in sex, whether it's actual sex or imaginal sex—what that then means is that if we want to support sex that's soul-making, sex that's soulful in our sense of the word, then that soul-making needs for the attention not to contract to a small area. For example, the area of maximal pleasure, whether that's the genitals or whatever it is. Because of what we just said, soul-making tends to include more of the body space and expand that, at least to a certain extent.

Continue beautifying this talk (part 5/9). Maintain the same tone and style as previous parts.

If we contract the area of attention—say just to the genitals or wherever there's maximal sensual pleasure, which would be a typical movement of the attention—that won't support soul-making. Rather, it needs us not to contract that awareness, or it's supported more by not contracting that, as well as, as we pointed out yesterday, not contracting into a kind of craving for pleasure or a craving for achieving the goal of orgasm or whatever it is.

If there's contraction in those ways, then soul-making won't be supported so much. This means, in other words, that the imaginal perceptions of the whole experience and the imaginal dimensions that are discoverable or revealed in the whole experience will be diminished—whether that's of the other, of the beloved other, of the sexual partner, of the imaginal other, of the self in that moment, and also of the eros and the sexuality itself. If there's contraction, either of the area of attention too much, or into a kind of goal-driven contraction, then the imaginal perception, the imaginal dimensions of other, self, and eros are diminished, contracted as well, limited, not supported.

But returning to what we're talking about mostly today, in terms of opening up the body and what we've already touched on—we've already alluded a little bit, I think, in different examples to the way that different organs of the body and different body parts can become ensouled. So, for example, the hands or the feet or the genitals or the intestines—they are ensouled in the sense of being given imaginal dimensions, given imaginal beauty, imaginal place. They are seen and felt and sensed to reflect, to echo, to mirror, to express not just the personal in the human level, but also the archetypal, the daimonic, the imaginal dimensions and the imaginal figures expressed in and through the organs or body parts, or the

body parts expressing, being those things.

There are all kinds of possibilities here, and I actually can't remember now what examples we've given over the different retreats, but really so many possibilities. I think we talked about the possibility if you massage someone's feet when they're ill or an old person, and how those feet and those legs might take on whole other imaginal dimensions. For instance, they become Jesus' feet or connected somehow with Jesus' feet or something like that. That would be one example.

Another very common one—many of you will probably be familiar with this, I imagine—is just how sensitive the hands are. How easy it is, especially with practice with the energy body, to feel healing energy streaming from your hands or from the palms of your hands. How easy, or relatively easy, let's say, that is, or maybe relatively common practice.

We could say that's an energetic perception. Of course, it's also an imaginal perception. They're both mixed there. And it's a lovely, lovely thing to practice. Sometimes, sitting with someone who's suffering in one way or another—and they don't even have to know—one just turns the palm to them, and it's a way of radiating healing, perhaps as they're talking, perhaps as you're sitting silently, perhaps as you're talking. There's a whole other level of the interaction going on there that's bringing these imaginal dimensions and the blessings of healing and connecting bodies and all of that.

If you haven't played with that sort of thing, it's really a lovely possibility and I would encourage that. And of course it could be from anywhere in the body, the whole body or the heart center or whatever. So many possibilities here.

What about—we talked on the last retreat, I'm not sure how many people picked this up, it's part of what I was referring to as the problem of inertia that we sometimes have as human beings, as practitioners—but the possibility of actually moving in the meditation. Meditation doesn't have to be static. So either the physical body is moving, and it's visible to others if others are there, or the physical body is still, but the energy in the imaginal body is moving and one is really sensitive to the feeling of that. That might look like a kind of slow dance thing or it could look like anything. Or one adopts certain postures that may not be typical postures because something is being expressed through the energy body and through the imaginal body.

What would it be, for instance, to play with that kind of thing—a sensitivity to the whole energy body and feeling the whole body and really attuning to that and feeling the movement of the hands and sensing the movement of the hands as music? Again, there's a synesthesia that we referred to in the last retreat, in the retreat on the poetry of perception. Music is a sound thing, and hands just moving is a bodily, kinesthetic sense, and perhaps a visual sense as well. What is it for the hands moving that they're somehow making music? Maybe they want to move and the hands do a slow dance or a fast dance or whatever it is. And it's music. And what is that music? Celestial music, divine music, the music of the deep body, the music of the earth, of the soil.

All kinds of possibilities here for this expansion of the body in terms of its parts and its organs. The expansion of our sense, our perception, our ideation of it. So the images of the body, the psyche with respect to the body, and the ideas of the body, the logos of the body, open up in all this, in the soul-making process.

But also the eros, the third of our little trinity there—also the eros of the body opens up. This might mean for some people that there is more eros and more libido flowing through the whole system. The system is open to more eros. We can see that as a divine influx. One is open more to the divine influx of eros. One can just see it as the, if you like, inevitable mechanics of the soul-making process. As we've said, as the eros stimulates and opens the psyche-logos, then there is more of the reciprocal stimulation of the eros, and so there is more eros. There's more attraction, there's more beauty, there's more divinity, there's more dimensionality, there's more yumminess, there's more sensitivity. All of that, and so there is more eros.

So the eros that's running through the psyche and through the body is opened up. And with that, the erotic sensibilities of the body are also opened.

So the images of the body, the ideas of the body, and also the eros of the body and the erotic sensibilities of the body—all this is opened. This is just one of the smallest examples of how this could happen, for it could unfold in countless ways. It's one of the ways the eros opens, if you like, and with that the perception of bodies opens.

I remember being at a course with one of my teachers, a monk in the States. It was a half meditation, half study retreat, and somehow we were discussing renunciation—perhaps exploring the Satipatthana Sutta. He was talking about the ways of contemplating the unattractiveness of the body as methods to let go of attachment. I think we were examining the passage from the Satipatthana Sutta on the unclean parts of the body. He explained how you could use that contemplation if you were bothered by sexual desire—contemplate the unclean parts of the body, and that would dampen your sexual fire.

Then someone in the group spoke up: "Oh yes, but I work as a nurse on the surgical team for transplants. When someone's waiting for a liver transplant and we get the call that someone has died in a road accident and they're a donor, and their liver is on its way in the ambulance—it's operation time. There's this anticipation for this liver to arrive, and it gets delivered in this blood bath. It's literally in a basin, soaked in blood because it needs to be preserved in blood. Something which, to most perception—in terms of what you're describing—would be absolutely disgusting: a liver soaking in blood, a raw liver soaking in blood. But actually, it looks beautiful. There's real beauty in the scent of the miracle of it—this is going to save a life."

My teacher, being very skillful, acknowledged this perspective. He didn't use the language of "ways of looking," but I'm pretty sure that dependency was recognized. This was long ago, but the point about the dependency on the way of looking was clear.

We've given examples too of the erotic imaginal—this sense of feasting on the flesh, feasting on the organs, drinking the blood of the erotic beloved. In that sense, the erotic relationship with the body has gone far beyond this division of clean and unclean parts, beyond the yucky and the superficially pleasant. It's transcended what traditional teaching often presents: "It's all very nice on the surface, but if you really saw the inside, you wouldn't like it." The expansion of eros has moved way beyond that.

In this eros moving through perception, moving through the body, there's also an expansion in the ways it perceives the body as attractive and what that encompasses. As I mentioned when giving those examples, there's no danger here of actually becoming a cannibal or anything like that. We're speaking of something deeply respectful, beautiful, loving—strange as that might sound to some people—imbued with holiness, but a lustful holiness, a lusty holiness, an erotic, full-blooded erotic holiness with much more range to it. That's just one small example among many, many possibilities.

So in other words, yes, there's this traditional contemplation of the unclean parts, and usually we think it's all very nice on the surface, but you'd be pretty put off in terms of the eros you feel toward someone and their body if you could see inside. But the nurse was saying it's not that simple, and that was acknowledged. We're adding a whole other level to that understanding as well. There are so many possibilities here.

I'm aware of painting in quite broad brushstrokes the whole movement here, but there are indeed countless possibilities. Freud, at one point in his theorizing, said that the human infant is characterized by "polymorphous perversity"—a wonderfully evocative phrase. The human infant is polymorphously perverse. Part of what this means is that the whole body of the infant is erotically sensitive. The entire body is, if you like, an erogenous zone. The infant naturally will be inclined, perhaps at different stages, to seek to gratify its eros—in Freud's view, its desire for sense pleasure—through different parts of the body, the whole body, in all kinds of ways.

There is thus the necessity of training by parents or caregivers, and through that training and what Freud called the superego—the moral supervisor, if you like, in relationship with the ego—this dynamic leads to a kind of contracting or shrinking of that polymorphous perversity, that unrestrained and all-inclusive eroticism. It's contracted through the training of upbringing and through the psychic structure of the superego, perhaps pushed down into the so-called unconscious. And also physically, there's a shrinking of the ways the body feels eros most easily, what's available in terms of how the eros moves in and through the body, where and how.

Now Freud—you can hear it in the very language he used: "polymorphous perversity." Perversity implies something bad, twisted, abnormal, negative, problematic. But Freud, in his view of human nature, regarded this contraction as really necessary. In his understanding, we are basically wild animals.

He was following on from Darwin and all that. We're basically wild animals with massive instinctual force that needs to be tamed, controlled by the strictures and structures of civilization and upbringing, and even

the structures and dynamics of the psyche internally. So polymorphous perversity is part of the Freudian theoretical legacy.

But now we're saying soul-making will open everything. The eros-psyche-logos dynamic will open everything, including the body, including the eros, in all kinds of ways. So we might say that in its opening up of the body and of the eros and of the sexuality, what it supports and opens is a polymorphous erotic soul-making—a polymorphously erotic soul-making, and a polyvalently erotic soul-making.

Polymorphous may mean it can change and manifest this way, manifest that way. Polyvalently might mean it can be situated here or there—the eros, the arousal, the erotic connection—in all kinds of locations, physically and psychically.

Rather than polymorphous perversity—suggesting something is there intrinsically and then needs to get squashed down—we're suggesting quite the reverse. The soul-making process, the expansion, enrichment, complication of eros-psyche-logos, actually begins to open the erotic soul-making of the body and of the psyche, so that there is this polymorphously and polyvalently erotic soul-making.

This means that the whole sense of eros and the body as a location and a vessel and a point of contact of the eros—and an object and a subject of the eros—becomes multifaceted and multidimensional and multi-delineated in different ways. In other words, the body presents, and the eros of the body grows new facets, grows new ways, things we hadn't even thought of before, things we hadn't even been sensitive to before.

Facets, dimensions, delineations—going back to what we said before, delineations get made. Because the eros-psyche-logos dynamic inevitably will include the body. It has to include the body at some point, and it will do it more and more. It's an increase in the facets, a multi-facetedness, a multi-dimensionality, an increase in the delineation, a kind of poly-erotic, poly-directionality of the eros. An increase in the modes and the surfaces and the subjects of the eros within one body and the directions.

Again, I'm aware of painting in broad brushstrokes, but just to give you a sense of the principle involved here is the most important thing.

Now, if there's potentially—theoretically—no limit to the soul-making process, to the dynamic of eros-psyche-logos and the way that expands, deepens, widens, what that implies is there's no limit to the ways the sense of the body can open. If the body is included in the soul-making process and gets involved in that, then there's no limit to the ways the sense of the body can open, because there's no limit to soul-making.

This means that the images, perceptions, ideas, understandings, and experiences of the body—no limit to the way all that can open. But also, no limit to the way the sense of the body as a site for myriad and diverse ways of knowing, ways of perceiving—that's also potentially infinite in the ways that it can open. The body as a site for myriad and diverse ways of knowing and ways of perceiving.

We've touched on this—for instance, my friend saying she senses with her ovaries or her ovaries have intelligence or knowing, knowledge coming through the imaginal tongue. There are all kinds of possibilities here. And if it's potentially infinite—the way that the body can open up as a locus, as a site for myriad and diverse ways of knowing and perceiving—we can't know what the future holds, what ways of knowing might open up for me, for you, for humanity. Because it's infinite, because the soul-making process will make delineations that don't even occur to me right now, or you, or us. It will gather sensitivities, will open up visions and senses and knowings there.

No limit to the ways the sense of the body can open, potentially, because there's no limit to soul-making.

Included in that is a statement about the logos of the body—in other words, the conception we have of the body. So often we consider the body and the mind or the body and the soul as different things. But as the soul-making dynamic opens up more and more, what it does is open up different views, different potential views. Going right back to the beginning of what we were saying, what that eventually means is that there is this potential to move in and out of different views, to entertain different views.

So the statement that the body is not the soul, or the body has no soul, is just one view. It can enter into that, it can see that way, it can sense that way, it can think that way. Sure. But it's only one view. And there are other views.

If by soul we mean—going back again to the beginning and the kind of glossary we were doing—that which knows and senses soulfully, that which knows, sees and senses soulfully, well, does the body have that?

Or one goes to a purely material view—there is no soul, there's just matter, and if you connect things the right way chemically, you get consciousness and thought and such—and that's just another view.

With soul-making and with reflection and intelligence and understanding, we have the capacity to entertain different views. The range of views we can entertain, the range of concepts and conceptual frameworks we can entertain—this expands with soul-making, with the practice. We're not believing in one idea, a single or ultimate truth or reality. This is how things are. This is how the body is. This is what matter is.

So there's something here about the very idea, the very logos of body. But there's also something here about the body as logos, meaning the body as a structure or structures of knowing, and the expansion of that beyond just the five senses given to us by contemporary psychology. The Buddha had six, but there are systems that have seven or eight or nine, and sometimes I've heard up to twelve.

The body as logos, as a locus of structures of knowing, more than the ones we are given by current neurophysiological science. The body as a womb of epistemic structures, a womb of modes of knowing. As the soul-making process, as the eros-psyche-logos dynamic meets and subsumes matter, flesh, body, then there is this womb, this potential. The body becomes a kind of womb or an area of potentiality of

epistemic structures, of possible modes of knowing. They can emerge, they can be born out of that. That's what the body is as subject.

With the whole imbuing or filling out of the sense of the body imaginally, the imaginal perception of the body, and that sensitivity and the beauty of that—the body, the sense of the body, the perception of the body can become greatly expanded in all kinds of ways, alive and multidimensional in all kinds of ways. This body can become a landscape, a soul-scape that is alive with its own intelligence, with its own will, with its own soul. Body as soul-scape that we can enter into. The multi-dimensionality of that. A very different way of perceiving and conceiving of body.

For some, that might be already the experience and already quite obvious. Body has its own intelligence. Again, I don't just mean how clever it is that the blood can transport immune factors to a site of a wound. I don't mean just a kind of metaphor of intelligence for something that's actually quite blind and dumb—a process that's just evolved through the forces of blind natural evolution, survival of the fittest. I mean intelligence, different kinds of intelligence. And I mean soul, and I mean will and desire.

For some, that's already obvious and already part of the experience. For others, this might sound completely preposterous, and the possibility of actually being able to perceive such a body—the body that way, with one's own or someone else's—might seem very distant.

In a way, it doesn't matter either way. What matters really is: what's the next step for the soul-making? With the intelligence of the movement of soul-making, where does it want to go next? And is there a block there?

We can ask that for the individual. Where does the soul-making want to go next? What does it want to do if it's with the body right now? What's the next opening for that individual, for any individual, me or you or whoever? Do I need to stay with a certain opening for a while, get used to that, before something else starts pressing and insisting on opening? And what am I blocking? What's being blocked and how? Through the image, through the logos, whatever. The block of the eros.

We can ask it individually, but also culturally. What is the next step? What is the next step for the soul-making? Where does it want to move? What does it want to expand? What does it want to enrich, widen, deepen, complicate?

With regard to the body, then, the body becomes infinite. Or the body is infinite. But by that I don't mean spatially infinite, and neither do I mean the body is infinite in the sense of being interconnected with all things—the butterfly wings in China affecting the breeze, or breathing in the air that the Buddha breathed in his first sermon. I don't mean infinite in that sense, interconnected with all things. I don't mean spatially infinite. I don't mean there being infinite awareness or infinite love or whatever it is in essence that the body is.

I mean infinite more in the sense of endlessly revealing, endlessly opening up for discovery, for

creation—creation-discovery—new facets, other facets, dimensions, aspects of body, and endlessly revealing as infinite in that sense.

So really, we're interested in what the body becomes, what it becomes through the soul-making process.

Also, of course, what the self becomes, what the other, what others become, what the sense of a human being becomes, what animals become, what plants, what the cosmos becomes through the soul-making process, and can become, what matter becomes, what divinity becomes through the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, what it becomes to us, to our experience, to our perception, to our conception.

And that's a different question than what it is. Being interested in what the body is presumes more of a realist notion—it is this. And I'm going to discover or prove to you or insist on my version of what it is. In terms of the energy body, you get different systems. There's these chakras, and they're placed here, and then another system, and some other tradition will say, "No, no, no, there's these many chakras, and they're placed here, and they're this color, not that color," and so forth. "Well, these are the channels that flow, the energy channels through the body, not those channels."

Or someone insisting on, again, the sort of scientific reductionist, classical scientific reductionist view of matter—this one-dimensionality—that's the reality. Or even what's quite popular in some more modern ways of thinking is kind of systems theory. The body as a system. So it's not reduced to a sort of basic element there, but it's a system. It's still a kind of limitation there, an insistence on reality and a kind of reductionism. Even as much as systems theorists protest that they're not reducing, there's still a kind of reduction to physicalism there.

But we're interested—I'm interested—in what the body becomes, what the body can become to us, just as I'm interested in what the self can become, what the other can become, what a human being, what animals, what the cosmos, what matter can become, what divinity can become, what nature can become.

Becoming—if we talk about the body, what it becomes as a felt field of experience, again, that whole range, what it can become as imaginal object and imaginal subject, what it becomes as object and subject, and what it can become as a locus, a field, a womb of ways of knowing. How can the body be experienced in perception as an object and as a subject in its epistemic potentials, with its epistemic potentials?

And again, for me the interest here is not even primarily—certainly not only, but not even primarily—for the sake of psychological health or balance, but the interest is in what does the soul-making want? What does the eros want? And to me that's interesting individually and culturally both.

And one of the movements there is a movement out of being restrained by a kind of duality between soul and body. So that there's, as I said, this opening of views to more plurality and more flexibility of views. So that one view is body and flesh has intelligence, intelligences, has desire, has eros, has soul, has will. And the sense of the body, the experience, the perception, the concept can be expanded. We can discover.

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