Aspects of the Imaginal (Part 3)

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So if we recap a little before we continue further, we've given a loose list of elements or aspects that we can identify that constitute the imaginal, the fully imaginal. We've said that there's a spectrum of the skillful use of imagination, from mindful imagination all the way to the imaginal. In relation to these elements and aspects of the imaginal that we want to point out and discern, we're developing our discernment and our refinement of discrimination and noticing. In relation to all that, we're holding it all loosely, with some ambivalence.

We do want to increase the precision and the depth and the subtlety of our discernment because that's part of the whole work. And we want to be loose with this. How many elements there are on the list is loose depending on how we divide it up—you'll see things are connected, or we could divide it differently, or say that's one or that's really two. The intention is certainly to encourage, not to discourage or overwhelm. So we need a little looseness.

There's a spectrum, and even what we mean by imaginal and soul-making has its own dynamic to it anyway, which is to some extent relatively arbitrary. At what point of that evolution of a dynamic do we say there's a cut-off and declare "now it's imaginal"? All this is held loosely, and I hope you can enter into that spirit of looseness with precision—precision with a kind of ease to it, looseness and fluidity to it.

We also said certainly that the list wasn't exhaustive or complete; we could add to it, do it differently. The elements and aspects that we're pointing to apply both to so-called intra-psychic images and to perceptions of material things—selves, others, objects in the world. So it applies both to so-called intra-psychic images and to what we're going to call sensing with soul.

One of the first things to say here is that in the way we understand it, there is nothing that is inherently imaginal. Something, some object or thing or event, is imaginal for someone—and even then, for someone at a specific time. There's nothing that is by itself inherently imaginal.

An imaginal image, or the imaginal, or sensing with soul, is a way of looking, a way of conceiving, a way of sensing an image or a perception. That's a better way of putting it. It's a relationship. It's a way of looking, conceiving, sensing—a relationship with an image or a certain perception in any of the senses. That constitutes the imaginal or sensing with soul.

When the relationship has certain elements in it or certain aspects to it, then something comes alive imaginally for us at that time when the relationship is such. We can also say when something is imaginal, there is a certain kind of relationship. In other words, sensing with soul is a relationship—a relationship

that we're talking about that is characterized and constituted by all these different aspects and elements.

Someone might have a film or a book in mind, or a piece of art. That film, book, or piece of art might have slightly surreal or imagistic representations in it—forms, figures, characters. They might be what seem to fit into the classical archetypes. This film has someone who's a warrior and someone who's a king and someone who's a clown and someone who's a mysterious prostitute and someone who's a thief and someone who's a madwoman—they're all classical archetypes, and we say, "Oh, it's an imaginal film, it's really imaginal," or "it's an imaginal book."

But in our conception, such a film, book, piece of art is not necessarily imaginal. Nor, incidentally, is it necessarily archetypal according to the way James Hillman would define archetypal. I'm not totally equating what we're doing with James Hillman's work, but there's overlap there. It's more in the relationship, more in the fruit of what an image or an object or a perception gives, that qualifies it to have the word imaginal or archetypal according to our conception—and also in terms of the word archetypal, according to James Hillman's understanding.

Clown, warrior, king, prostitute, madwoman, thief—these are not inherent aspects of the imaginal. It's rather the relationship with anything at all. When that relationship opens up, creates and discovers a sense of dimensionality, a sense of unfathomability, some kind of sense of divinity, some kind of sense of beauty that touches us, some kind of sense of meaningfulness for us, some kind of way that it echoes and mirrors us and our lives in that meaningfulness, some kind of mystery, some kind of eros, some kind of potential expansion of the whole eros-psyche-logos dynamic—all that and more. When the relationship stimulates, triggers, opens, invites, creates and discovers all that, then we say this thing is imaginal.

Maybe that film, book, piece of art was all that, did all that at a certain time for person A, but for person B, they look at it and just see—it's not triggering that imagination. Why? Because the relationships that person A and person B each have with said film, book, piece of art are different. One constitutes, supports, fertilizes the whole opening of the erotic imagination, and one doesn't.

I want to elaborate on some of these elements over this group of talks—some just to touch on, some to elaborate a bit more. One way of thinking about all this: when we talk about an image, we think of an object. I've also pointed out in talks in the past that the self gets involved, drawn into the imaginal constellation. The self becomes imaginal in relation to the imaginal other or object. And then the world does in cosmopoiesis and all that. That's really important.

But to expand on that, we could say that when we talk about an imaginal image, what we're really talking about, or one way to understand what we're talking about, is that there's a kind of lattice—a constellation, an arrangement of elements that are all connected with each other.

I don't want to push this analogy too far, but imagine something like a fluid crystal structure—a lattice or constellation. There are nodes or elements that are somewhat discrete, yet not entirely separate. As I said,

they're all interconnected.

When we talk about something becoming imaginal or entering the world of the imaginal—this relationship that supports, constitutes, opens, and ignites the erotic-imaginal—we're really speaking about this lattice. There's a lattice with nodes distributed throughout. When something is fully imaginal, all the nodes are firing, igniting, alive, mirroring each other, feeding each other, opening each other, reflecting and empowering one another.

For practice, this understanding isn't merely a matter of definition and precision—it has real implications. When we consider the spectrum toward the imaginal—from various uses of imagination toward the fully, genuinely, authentically imaginal—part of what determines where something falls on this spectrum is how many of these nodes in the lattice are firing together and mutually empowering each other. How many are lit up? How many are alive in this way?

What this means in practice is that we can sometimes nudge things along this spectrum. When we have an image or perception, we can guide it toward the more fully, authentically imaginal in several ways—by taking into consideration and being aware of the different possible nodes in the imaginal constellation, in the lattice, and perhaps wiggling or jiggling one of them.

Just wiggle this particular node—the energy body, for instance. Bring that alive a bit more with increased awareness. Sometimes this requires deliberate action. Other times it's simply a matter of noticing—noticing a certain element or aspect we haven't fully perceived. It's there latently or potentially, and our mindful noticing of it, our resonating with that particular aspect—let's say the energy body—brings that node alive in the very act of noticing, making it more imaginal.

Here I am with this image, but it's not really fully imaginal. Here I am with this perception that's not really fully sensing with soul. Then, for instance, I begin to notice how it echoes and mirrors my life and journey in some way that's really hard to articulate fully—perhaps I can partially articulate it. I start to tune into that and allow myself to feel and notice, paying subtle, sensitive attention to that echoing and mirroring between myself, my life, and this image.

Or I start to notice how the energy body feels, or I notice the sense of meaningfulness, or I observe that it has this kind of dimensionality and unfathomability, or the aspect of being neither real nor not real—somehow neither category really applies—this imaginal middle way or theatrical quality.

One possibility is simply noticing, gently looking for a certain element. Often, as I said, it's already there, latent, waiting in the shade or darkness. Our noticing and attuning to it brings that particular node alive, and then that node begins to ignite others. It's like blowing on a corner of a fire—that side of the fire or piece of wood ignites another one.

We could say that noticing one of these aspects—sometimes it takes just one—can ignite that particular node, that specific aspect or element. This can either suddenly or gradually illuminate, ignite, fire up, and

turn on the other nodes, until the whole thing becomes imaginal. It's as if we're blowing on a node.

Sometimes it's a matter of noticing. Sometimes it's about empowering it somehow. Sometimes it involves what I'd call wiggling or jiggling it. With the energy body, for example, this might mean paying attention to it in a different way, or imagining the body in a certain way, or spreading the energy. These are what I mean by wiggling or jiggling possibilities.

There's something very important in all this—in this loosely speaking list we're going to explore. As I said, it's crucial for refining discernment and achieving clarity, but it's also important for practice and potentially has significant power. These are like keys or ignition points that can turn the whole thing on and move it toward the fully or authentically imaginal.

Having said all that, I feel quite strongly about this: there's a kind of middle way here. Soul-making and the imaginal, for me, involve an element of grace. It's not purely within the remit of what we can control with clever techniques, nor is it fully outside that range. It's as if we are given something. Soul gives us something, opens a door for us. It's a grace.

It's never fully—and that's the key word—never fully in our control or under our control or mastered by our technique. There's always some mystery in it and some sense of receiving something. I think, "Gosh, where did that come from? How did that happen?" We could say that in a certain way, soul is giving us something, showing us something of herself.

So to me, that not just attitude, but that awareness, that acknowledgment, recognition that there will always be a limit to our technique and to the degree with which soul and soul-making and image are under our control and mastered by our technical manipulations. And yet there is, at the same time—we can do things, we can jiggle things and notice things and something comes alive.

Much of this conception work involves straddling different conceptions and different attitudes, different orientations, somehow mysteriously holding both. This is really, really important. On the one hand, there's a grace involved. The soul is always bigger than me. It's always bigger than, and if you like, more powerful than my ego and my will. And at the same time, there's quite a lot we can subtly work with and support by our placement of attention, our attitude, our inner work—what we could loosely include under the word technique. So it's straddling both those approaches or attitudes.

I touched on the energy body. We could actually start there. I threw it in at some point in the list towards the end, but we could start there, and there's no order in which these elements or nodes of the lattice need to ignite or progress. It's more like a network of nodes or lights, and you can enter from any direction—part of the beauty of it. But let's start with the energy body, just to give an example.

What this means—I've already said it, but let's make it really clear—is that awareness of the energy body is characteristic of the imaginal. We could say it's one element of our list, depending on how we divide it up. Something is not imaginal in our language. There is not the sensing with soul for us without the

awareness of the energy body. So that's characteristic of the imaginal, characteristic of this relational constellation.

As we go through the nodes of the lattice, you'll see that some more obviously seem to pertain to the object and some more obviously seem to pertain to the subject. But all that gets mixed up and expanded. If we just start with this: characteristic of the imaginal and that relational constellation is awareness of the energy body, a sensitivity to what's happening in the energy body in the moment.

What this means for practice is that bringing awareness to the energy body, filling that energy body with awareness and sensitivity and the delicacy involved in that, tuning to it, including that in our awareness as we pay attention to either a so-called intrapsychic image or something else in the material world—including the energy body awareness—can, because it's a node in the lattice, actually stimulate, ignite, fan the fire of, and bring into co-burning the other nodes of the lattice.

So bringing awareness to the energy body, just noticing what's going on there and turning the dial up on the awareness and sensitivity there, can stimulate the opening of the erotic imaginal. This has two aspects. The erotic part means that if there might be craving there, sometimes what happens as we bring awareness to the energy body is craving morphs into eros. We could say that. There's a transformation of craving or grasping into eros, and we've talked a lot about the difference between those two in the past. I'm not going to go into it right now. But because the energy body is a node in the lattice, giving attention to that, we support that node to come alive, and then that might start to spread, and the whole thing becomes more imaginal, or completely imaginal, so to speak.

There's a mutual dependent origination between the nodes of this imaginal constellation, this lattice. In other words, when the energy body awareness is included and comes alive, then either suddenly or gradually the soul-making resonances might come alive, or some other aspect of the nodes of the lattice, and vice versa. As we allow the soul-making resonances to come alive, we start to feel some of those resonances in the body and it stimulates the energy body. We could probably take any two elements of this lattice, nodes in this lattice, and say that they are mutually dependent, which means one gets stimulated, another gets stimulated, or they feed each other and can trigger each other.

If we were to give instructions, it might be: here I am working with an intrapsychic image or working in relation to some thing, some object, some person or being in the world. I'm wanting to support sensing them with soul for that relation to become imaginal. As an instruction, can I just drop in perhaps the question or encouragement to myself: can I be in relationship with this object, whatever it is, intrapsychic or otherwise, with the whole of my body?

Sometimes I'm in relationship with just a part of my body, or I'm just relating through the eyes, or just through one sense, or just through my head center, or just through my heart sense. Can I somehow put my whole body in relationship with this other? That includes the whole body, the whole energy body—I'm feeling it, and I'm feeling it in relationship. What is it that I sense this other, this object or person, with my

whole body? And within that, including that, my whole body—I'm aware of the energy body there and what that feels like, what my sense of it is.

I'll come back and talk more about this whole concept of the nodes and the lattice or the imaginal constellation and the ignition of that later. But I hope you get the general principle of what I'm talking about. It's really worth including this awareness and starting to experiment with it and noticing the magic here.

confusing or hard to grasp clearly. In a way, it's tricky because these are deliberately open concepts without hard edges—and that's part of their beauty, though I recognize it might be frustrating or simply confusing for some people. My articulation of these concepts is evolving over time, but the concepts themselves are intentionally fluid. They don't have rigid boundaries, as I've mentioned before and will explore again.

So what do we mean by energy body? The energy body is actually a way of looking and conceiving rather than a particular experience. When we speak of energy body, we're referring to a whole range of experiences understood through a specific lens—a way of looking at and sensing bodily experience that feels the space of the body as a field of energy, vibration, or texture.

This encompasses an enormous range of possibilities. The energy body might feel very solid, dense, earthy in a certain sense of that word, all the way to extremely ethereal, with everything in between. It's a way of looking and sensing that perceives the space of the body as a field of energy, vibration, and texture, embracing all the range potentially included in that.

Importantly, it's also a way of conceiving that doesn't limit the body or our idea of body to only the conventional scientific, materialist, and typical modern conception. For example, it moves beyond the view that the body is just flatly material—mere matter without depth, dimensionality, or soul—where consciousness somehow emerges when neurons fire, though no one quite understands how. This classical scientific materialism conceives matter as fundamentally flat and claims this physicalist reductionism as the only true understanding of what the body really is.

Even physicalist systems theory, though people argue it's not reductionist, still falls short when we're talking about something beyond the purely physical. While it may view the body as a system of physical elements that emerges into something higher than pure matter, it remains limited.

The energy body conception also means that our sense and understanding of the body isn't being judged according to socially fashionable notions of attractiveness. The energy body embraces all of this—it's a way of looking and conceiving that transcends these limitations.

While we're exploring this subject, let me elaborate on something we may return to later. This connects to the whole idea that any concept we're using is linked with other concepts, and where one concept shades into another is not rigidly defined or clearly demarcated.

At the risk of adding complexity, I think this will help fill out our understanding of body and energy body. I would say that whenever there is any sense of body—anytime whatsoever—there is some concept, some image, and some inner felt sense of that body.

Any sense of body includes some concept of what that body is, some kind of image of it—whether visual or otherwise—and some inner felt sense. This includes energy body and applies to any experience of body.

The concept might be, for example, that typical scientific materialist biological conception of bones, organs, tissues, and so forth, composed of cells, which are themselves composed of intercellular structures, and so on. All of these, in this view, exist in interactive relationship with each other and with the outer material environment. That's one possible concept.

At other times—and some of you will have tasted this—the concept might be that the body is made of light. There's an actual conception of a light body, a subtle body of light. The concept might emerge from certain meditative experiences, particularly some jhanic states.

For instance, coming out of the sixth jhana—the sphere of infinite consciousness—one might have a very real conception and sense that the body's substance is actually consciousness. All this apparent matter is revealed as consciousness, perhaps a kind of cosmic consciousness. This would be a typical concept arising in the aftereffects of the sixth jhana.

There's always some concept operating whenever there's a sense of body. We might not be fully aware of what the concept is or able to articulate it completely, but some kind of concept is always present when there's any sense of body.

I also mentioned there's always some kind of image when there's any sense of body. This image may be one of space—the very nature of the body experienced as space, as in the fifth jhana. The image might be imaginal in the sense we've been using that word, where the body is perceived as numinous, multidimensional, possessing its own autonomous intelligence—all those aspects of the imaginal constellation we're exploring in these talks.

Of course, the image of the body might also be very non-imaginal—just the contours of a body in the mind's eye with nothing numinous or multidimensional about it, certainly nothing suggesting autonomous intelligence. It's simply a body in the usual sense, and the image itself feels rather flat.

So there's always some concept, there's always some image, and there's always some felt sense—some inner felt sense of that body, of the texture of sensation in the space of the body. In the space the body is perceived to exist, there's always some sense. And again, that sense might be that there is an absence there. That would be more akin to some of the formless jhanas. That kind of felt sense involves a disappearing of felt sense, but you still have the felt sense of absence, of non-solidity, of space. So there's always some kind of felt sense or other—the sense of some kind of density, some kind of field of feeling or vibrational energy. And again, the range is huge.

Now, of course, all these three—concept, image, and felt sense that are part of bodily experience, the phenomenon of the body for us—they're actually interrelated and not separate. They overlap each other. Just a little examination of your experience and thinking about this, you'll see that. So we say, it's good to delineate things, and it's also good not to get too stuck on these delineations. There's some concept, some image, and some inner felt sense, and they overlap.

So why are we saying this? We're talking and delineating this way, not to claim or even attempt a description of truth. This is the truth of the body. This is the reality of the body. It's really this kind of matter or it's really that kind of matter or whatever. We're saying all this and making these delineations in order to help open up the possibilities of experience, of image into the imaginal, of conception, of energy, of perception and emotion—in fact, of body, matter, self, others, world, soul, and cosmos.

We want, by making these discriminations, opening up and putting them in relation to each other, to stimulate an awareness that can then unblock—because we're not trapped in certain conceptions that we're not really even aware that we have. So we want to unblock what may, without our even realizing it, be blocking or inhibiting these openings of soul-making.

So that's behind all these delineations, discriminations, and definitions.

Going back to our main point, the energy body awareness is one node in this lattice that's mutually dependently arising. In noticing it, in wiggling or jiggling it, in tuning to it, blowing on that ember, if you like, brings it—fires it up more, ignites it more—and that can support the opening of the whole, or the ignition of the whole lattice into something more profoundly, fully, authentically imaginal.

Another aspect that is intrinsic to what we would call imaginal images or sensing with soul is that the imaginal and sensing with soul open up soul-making. It's kind of a circular definition. And we will return to this word, soul-making. I've talked a lot about it in the past, but we'll return to it even in this set of talks. But basically, that's an element of the imaginal constellation—there is a sense of soul-making. Something is only imaginal if it brings soul-making. We're only sensing with soul if there's some sense of soul-making there.

So what then is the relationship between this second element that we're focusing on—this business of soul-making—and imagination? Not imaginal and soul-making, but imagination and soul-making.

In the way we're using that term soul-making, as I said, it may be quite different from how other people may use it or how you may understand it at this point. There are quite a few differences as well.

So soul-making implies, in our definition, that eros and psyche and logos—concept—are involved and worked or stretched in the process, in the dynamic of soul-making. Eros, psyche, and logos are involved and worked and stretched.

Now psyche, we said in previous retreats and talks—when we use the word psyche, one of the meanings

we intend is image. The image, that is also the collection of images. So, in the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, the psyche, the image, may not be image in the obvious sense. In other words, there's an image that I see intrapsychically, or this object that I'm looking at in the world. It may be more the fantasy of what is happening and the self in relationship, or in the process of what's happening.

For example, a person practicing with dedication and opening up the jhanas deliberately, going step by step and piecing it together and really beginning to feel—first of all, this is amazing. What beautiful states, what a blessing to be able to open to these dimensions and discover them and be nourished and resourced by these dimensions.

But secondly, one is struck on that path, on the jhanic path as one develops it. One is struck like, wow, this is what the Buddha was talking about. It just totally fits the description. When he gives those beautiful images of the lake fed by an underground spring and delineates what's involved in the second jhana, third jhana, one absolutely recognizes intuitively—this is absolutely what he was talking about.

Then one feels this beautiful connection between oneself and the Buddha and the whole 2500-year tradition carried on. Here little old me is experiencing what the Buddha was talking about. I recognize it from the words, and it's been handed to me through the tradition. I'm walking that path, and who knows what else we'll be able to open.

So there's a fantasy there, actually, in the good sense, of the beauty of that connection, the inspiration of it, the fantasy of the self on the path, which is also fantasy, and the tradition, which is also fantasy, the whole thing. So that's one aspect of the way image or fantasy is working there, with the jhanas, which in themselves are actually non-imagistic states.

They're the quieting of mental representation and image, by definition, almost.

But it also might be that the soul-making pertaining... Let me approach this differently. The soul-making might arise when something is new for us, when we are opening up new territory that feels meaningful, that has a kind of beauty and is beyond what we already know.

Imagine I'm in contact with a jhana. A jhana's opening, and it's new to me. I haven't thoroughly become utterly familiar with it. That takes a while—to get used to jhanas. It's still new. It's still got this kind of otherness, of beyondness that I can get to know more of. So it becomes an object of eros for me, of attraction. But it doesn't involve image in the usual sense.

Anything that, when we're at the stage with something that's just opening for our psyche, for our consciousness, for our being—so for instance, jhanas, or it might just be heart work. Perhaps we've never really done any heart work, and then we come to Gaia House retreats, and some of the teachers speak so beautifully and encourage this kind of sensitivity to one's heart, and the opening of the heart, and the valuing of the beauties in the heart and the vulnerability and the honesty with oneself about one's heart and the honesty with others.

All this might be new. It's new territory. We're expanding into something. And for a while, it stays new. When it's new and meaningful and beautiful like that and attractive—even though we might be a little daunted—then in that stage of newness and beyondness, it creates a "more" for me in expanding my being, opening new territory of expansion. Then there can be soul-making in relation to that thing. And as I said, the thing itself and the self in that process can become fantasy as well. But it might not be an image in the usual sense, or in the commonly thought-of sense.

Just body awareness. Someone may never have done any body awareness. I remember back to my really first years, I was very young, starting meditation. Just coming into my body, it was like, "Wow, wow." And even more than that, I remember—I think I might have told this story before—I started learning meditation in a class, a weekly class. And the homework, I think it was for the first week, was to do five minutes of meditation a day. Not half an hour, not forty-five minutes, five minutes.

So I dutifully did that. I was very taken by the teachings as a first-timer. And it was like opening a whole world. That five minutes, it was... And I went back to the teacher and said, "Wow, it's just unbelievable. I really feel different." And I couldn't quite—I was struggling to articulate it with him. What had happened? He said, "That's mindfulness." Oh, mindfulness. And just that five minutes, it was new for me. So there can be soul-making in relation to that, and again, in relation to this path, what I'm discovering, what's being stretched.

But it's not an image in the usual sense, or the typically understood sense. And again, like I said, jhanas, body awareness, energy body might be new, and it's like, "Wow," and that itself stretches us, and may—again, we have a sense, a fantasy of ourselves on the path of practice. That whole thing becomes fantasy there.

Or playfulness. I've emphasized a lot the importance of playfulness in practice. And again, someone might have had very little of that in their life. And then they begin to let themselves have some playfulness, and that feels soul-making at first. Just the playfulness itself, because something is being expanded, drawn into new territory, with all this meaningfulness and beauty and kind of beyondness that's beyond what I already know.

But these elements—playfulness, heartfulness, energy, body awareness—in themselves, they are necessary and integral elements of imaginal practice, of sensing with soul and the imaginal constellation. So playfulness, heartfulness, energy, body awareness—I didn't mention some of them before, but they are also necessary and integral elements. But in themselves, they do not make something soul-making. Just playfulness in itself... They don't make something imaginal either.

They may if they're new.

Conversely, as we've already explored in previous talks, mindful imagination or embodied imagination is not necessarily imaginal nor soul-making in our sense. When we use our imagination, it might be skillful

and genuinely helpful, but there's often a kind of reductionism involved. We find ourselves reducing the image, making it too literal, or narrowing it down to a singular meaning. We might view the image and imaginal work as serving solely or primarily our personal growth, or see it as representing merely a part of ourselves.

All these attitudes and elements won't allow the full and authentic imaginal to emerge. They will limit—not prevent entirely, I hope this all makes sense—but they will limit the degree, depth, fullness, and range of soul-making that's possible. In other words, it's quite possible to have skillful and beneficial use of the imagination without it being soul-making, or with only very limited soul-making occurring.

However, if using the imagination skillfully is something entirely new—something that previously wasn't allowed in one's tradition or upbringing—and we're suddenly introduced to it or begin allowing it, then this skillful use of imagination, because of its newness, may indeed be soul-making to some degree.

So any skillful imagination is not necessarily imaginal. Any skillful use of the imagination is not necessarily imaginal, but it may be soul-making.

Similarly, one might encounter an image from a book, a daydream, a film—any imaginative form. This image might deeply touch our heart, perhaps even move us to tears of compassion. While it's beautiful and important to be touched in this way, it doesn't necessarily mean that just because the heart is very moved, the experience is imaginal or soul-making in itself.

Soulfulness is, if you like, bigger than heartfulness. It includes heartfulness but involves much more. In certain language, you could say heartfulness is a necessary but not sufficient element of the imaginal constellation. The imaginal does touch our heart in countless different ways, but heartfulness alone is not enough for something to qualify as imaginal.

Let me highlight one more element before we close today. I mentioned this in our earlier list—it might have been the first one—and it represents our third node: loving and being loved. You could count this as two elements or just one.

Both the imaginal and sensing with soul include a sense of being loved by this imaginal object, other, or being. I've spoken about this before, but I want to highlight it now. The love in the imaginal, or the love of the imaginal, from the imaginal, always has a particular flavor or character specific to that image and that relationship. This imaginal figure loves me in a very particular way that harmonizes with its character and our unique relationship. This love may evolve and change over time.

I'm emphasizing this because sometimes we hold too narrow a vision of what love looks like and feels like, how it can manifest. There are vastly different kinds of love. Some loves are tough loves—more stern, distant, disciplined. Others are soft, warm, melting, comforting, and easeful. It's all love.

Part of tuning to an imaginal figure or object involves discerning and feeling into the particular quality or

characteristic flavor of the love that is present, the being loved that exists there. Sometimes this being loved isn't obvious at all initially, but we gradually recognize: "Oh yes, there is love here." This recognition ignites and stimulates that particular node of the lattice, which can then stimulate others. It helps us enter and open more fully to the authentically imaginal, moving us along that spectrum.

The love flows both ways. We might be more aware that we love this tree but not yet notice how the tree loves us—with its own particular kind of loving. Or vice versa. We notice one direction of the love that flows, moves, connects, and passes between us, but not the other.

Whether you count these as two elements or one, this is part of what we can notice and even work with intentionally. Actually affirming our love, for instance, is more than just noticing that we love.

I'll come back to that, I hope, in a later talk. What is it to actually speak? "I love you" – to say that, to feel it, not just to feel it and notice that we love, but actually to affirm it, to make that gesture.

So sometimes it's that kind of wiggling or jingling or empowering that actually stimulates the love, which can then stimulate the sense of being loved, perhaps, or just generally the other nodes of the whole lattice. And sometimes, as I said, it's much more about noticing. It's like, "Oh yeah. Oh yeah, there's that. Oh, how beautiful. There's that element of love there."

And just tuning to it, bringing that sensitivity to notice what kind it is and linger with it and resonate with it and vibrate with it, so to speak. Let it touch the soul.

Okay, let's stop there. Thank you for listening.

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