Between Ikon and Eidos: Image & Hermeneutics in Meditation (Part 3)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 57:43

So what if, instead of one worldview, reality view, ontology, epistemology, cosmology being declared the singular truth over another or others, instead of that kind of cultural war? What if we opened up to the idea of pluralism? Not just because we think we should be nice to each other—and we should—but actually on philosophical grounds, because we realize the mistake in insisting there is a singular reality, a singular truth, approached by a singular epistemology.

Again, so much at the forefront, ahead of his time, Nietzsche points out how much what's going on for us emotionally, our affects, actually affect the perspectives we have. Let me read a passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Let us guard, he says, against the snares of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself." These always demand that we should think of an "I" that is completely unthinkable, an "I" turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces through which alone seeing becomes seeing something are supposed to be lacking. Those kinds of ideas about pure knowledge always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspective knowing. And the more affects, the more emotions or emotional drives we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we use to observe one thing, the more complete will our concept of this thing, our so-called objectivity, be.

So, plurality. More affects equals more perspectives, more eyes. And then, if you like, reality or a thing—as I said, text or existence—being multi-aspected, amenable to multiple perspectives, rather than just one.

So that our knowing is always—it's always got, as I said, a desire. It's interested in something. We've always got some kind of affect going on, some kind of mind state and some kind of drive or intention. And so it's always situated. The knower, the seer, the meditator, whatever it is, is always situated. There's an entwining of our desires, our drives, our thought, our concepts, our affect, all of that.

A writer named David Owen writes about Nietzsche: our consciousness is neither disembedded from all of that, and from culture, nor disembodied. Knowing, like seeing, is an activity which attends the embedded and embodied character of human subjectivity. So whether it's perception or conception, it's influenced by desire, affect, perspective, body, all of that.

Nietzsche talked about knowing as interpreting. All knowing about the world is necessarily an act of interpretation, a selection of certain features and a disregarding of others. All knowing about the world is necessarily an act of interpretation, of hermeneutics—a selection of certain features and a disregarding of

others—and that's exactly what science does. We only know, quote, "according to our point of view, our particular cognitive and affective perspective."

I'm actually quoting now from Christopher Hauke, who wrote a book about Jung and includes discussion about postmodern thought and Nietzsche. So we only know according to our point of view, our particular cognitive and affective perspective. And no knowledge, including that of so-called science, can be exempt from this. Moreover, we select according to our interests. So we're back with this: what do we want? And can we actually admit that what we want is influencing our concepts, worldview, perspective, interpretation, slant, perception, conception?

There is no disinterested knowing, and Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds"—he wrote this at the end of the 19th century—"it is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that physics too is only an interpretation and an arrangement of the world according to our requirements, if I may say so, and not an explanation of the world."

So the affects, what's going on for us emotionally, and our intentions and our desires affect our perspectives. Knowledge is perspectival. The ideas—in other words, the ideas and the perception, the conception and the perception, all our cognition—are dependent on what's going on emotionally and what our desires are. Knowing is interpreting, which involves selecting, emphasizing certain aspects, disregarding others. Interpreting is another word for hermeneutics. And our interpretations depend on our interests. It's wrapped up with our desires. What do we want?

As I said, mindfulness too is not divorced from desire. Mindfulness wants something. What does it want? Always our interests, our desires are wrapped up in our perspectives, which give to us then what we see and what we think.

Then there follows this David Owen, who's writing about Nietzsche, talks about pluralism. So this is what I wanted to emphasize: that an interpretation about the world—in this idea of pluralism, this idea of interpretation that Nietzsche had—does not exclude the truth of other interpretations of the world which serve other interests.

It is an important feature of perspectivism, this idea that reality and existence is open to multiple perspectives. It is an important feature of perspectivism that it rejects the idea that the truth about the world could be exhausted by any single description of it. So there's actually an insistence on pluralism, not just because we need to get on with each other—which is important—but also on philosophical grounds. Actually be honest, be rigorous. Look what's happening in perception and conception, belief and assumption and mindfulness and philosophy and science and all the rest of it.

So the truth of a certain interpretation, of a certain hermeneutics, of a certain perspective, doesn't imply the lack of truth of other interpretations. Again, Isaiah Berlin, writing about Vico and talking within the context of pluralism, says: "I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne. We have different tastes. There's no

more to be said." That is relativism. So that's not pluralism. It's just, I like this, you like that. We have different tastes, that's it. That's relativism.

Vico's view, Berlin writes, is not that—it is what I should describe as pluralism. That is the conception that there are many different ends that human beings may seek and still be fully rational, fully human, capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other. So it's not an exclusive singular truth. There are different takes, different perspectives, and they can all have truth. They can all be true. They can all be rational because they serve different ends. In other words, what do we want? What's our interest? That will shape the perspective, that will shape the interpretation, that will shape the perception and conception. And all wrapped in that is the epistemology, the ontology, the cosmology, the metaphysics, and all that.

So we human beings have different ends and we may seek different ends and still be fully rational, fully human, capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other. So again, it's a social concern. But for me it's more than just a social concern—it's a philosophical concern as well.

So we have, in our soul-making logos and practice, the end of soul-making. That's the ends to which we're aiming. And aiming it at that is different than aiming it at an objective truth, or saying this is true and that other thing isn't. So we're employing rationality. Some of this logos employs rationality in the service of the end of soul-making, the goal of soul-making.

We come back again and again to this question: what do you want? What do I want? What do you want? Of course, that changes at different times. In some situations, I want this or that, and I have this perspective or that perspective. What do we want now?

I heard two stories about a Burmese Sayadaw. And these are secondhand, but... One said that he must have ordained as a monk after he had children—or a child or something—and he had been practicing as a meditator before that. Otherwise it doesn't quite make sense to me. He says he was present at the birth of his child and lifted the child as they were born and held the child. And then he said, "I looked inside myself and there was no emotion. There was no emotion." And this was described as a triumph of Dharma practice. This was the fruit of his Dharma practice: that here was his own son or daughter lifted up from the birth and there was no emotion. This is a triumph of practice, or being portrayed—or conveyed, as I understood it—as a triumph of practice.

And the person who conveyed this story to me said she was... horrified was not her word, but she was saying, "Boy, is that what I want?"

I have questions about this approach.

Another story involved this same Sayadaw walking in the beautiful hills of Burma—I've never visited them, but apparently they are exquisitely beautiful rolling green hills that fade into the blue of the sky.

The monks were walking mindfully through these hills, and this person who shared the story was a monk at the time, serving under this Sayadaw.

At a certain point, the junior monk stopped, completely overcome by the beauty of the environment around him—these hills, the sky, the nature there. He stood in rapt awe for a minute or so. The Sayadaw, who had been walking in single file, came up behind him and simply said, "What is beauty? It's just form and color."

This junior monk thought to himself, "I don't think you and I understand each other." He didn't say it aloud, but that was his inner response.

So again, the question arises: What do you want? What kind of sensing do you want to open up? What kind of emotional life do you want to cultivate? Where is your practice headed? Where do you want it to go?

I read about another Burmese teacher who described what he conceived of as the Arahant experience. It basically sounded like an impersonal machine, simply aware of atomistic processes unfolding in time. This, according to him, was the fully enlightened being's experience of existence—a kind of ticker tape of life and being.

So does the victor—Arahant, by the way, means victor or foe destroyer—does the victor become a prisoner? A prisoner of a certain mode and direction and scope of sensing, perceiving, believing, and conceiving?

It's a whole other question whether these descriptions really represented the totality of these monks' experience. Was it really true that he always had no emotion regarding his children? Did he always perceive beauty only to deconstruct it as meaningless shades of form and color that we can only get attached to in problematic ways, and therefore must see through? Does the Arahant really experience only that atomistic process and its impersonality?

Or is it that the conceptual framework doesn't allow them to articulate different experiences and different dimensions of being? Is it really that they've created such a prison that they've completely cut off certain kinds of sensibilities and experiences? Or is it simply that they lack the language and conceptual structure to articulate, give value to, or even admit experiencing something different?

This connects to what I used to call—and still call—"dot-to-dot meditation." I taught this in the context of emptiness practice, and it's quite an easy meditation to do with basic mindfulness. It involves a kind of reductionism. Instead of allowing experiences to join up into one big problematic thing, or something lovely—perhaps anticipating a fantastic experience where the mind has joined together these atomistic dots—you deconstruct that, seeing the dot-to-dot nature.

I called it that because of those drawing books I had as a very young child, where you have numbered dots

and you draw lines between them with pencil or crayon, and suddenly you have a complete drawing from these separate atoms. This meditation involves seeing a certain level of fabrication in experience, so you can unfabricate by becoming aware of that process. There's a reduction involved, and a reductionism in the view that follows.

There is indeed a strong strand of reductionist perception—reductionist ontology and epistemology—in the Dharma, something I've employed myself. Interestingly, you find this in other traditions as well.

I was reading about Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor who was also a highly respected and influential Stoic philosopher. Through Michel Foucault's analysis, I learned that Marcus Aurelius describes three types of practices: exercises decomposing the object in time, exercises decomposing the object into its constituent parts, and exercises of reductive disqualifying description—all very Dharma-esque approaches.

Foucault gives a striking example involving musical notes or dance movements. Marcus Aurelius's philosophical instruction is: pay attention to music, but when you're around beautiful music or dance, pay attention in a way that atomizes the experience. Focus just on this note right now, not the whole sweep of melody or the flow and integrity of the dancer's movement—not the gestalt or wholeness of the motion.

Why? Marcus Aurelius explains that this approach allows you to "scorn a delightful song" or dance. He advises: "Always remember to go straight for the parts themselves and by analysis come to scorn them"—to look down upon them.

The reasoning is clear: if we experience a dance in the continuity of its movements, or hear a melody in its unity, we will be carried away by the beauty of the dance or the charm of the melody. We will be weaker than it. But if we want to be stronger than the melody or dance, if we want to prevail over it and retain superiority—if we don't want to be weaker than the wholeness of the melody—we must dissect it instant by instant, note by note, movement by movement. When we do this, we realize at once that there is nothing good in these individual notes and movements.

This text on musical notes and dance concludes with Marcus Aurelius saying: "Always remember to go straight for the parts themselves and by analysis come to scorn them"—though he does make an exception regarding virtue and morality of the self.

And now, apply the same procedure to life as a whole.

So this analytical deconstruction of the perception of continuities extends to life itself. This approach was very popular in Pali Canon Buddhism and other Buddhist traditions, particularly in Theravada, as well as in different kinds of spiritual traditions that mirror this methodology.

But what's particularly interesting to me here is that the very examples Marcus Aurelius uses are music and dance. This is exactly, I think, the sort of thing that Nietzsche, were he aware of it, would howl at with

outrage and his own kind of scorn.

When does disenchantment become just silly? When does reductionism become silly and serve only limited ends?

We can end up applying this analytical approach to life as a whole and then actually clinging to the view, the interpretation, the hermeneutics of reality that ensues. Why? Again, it's because then we will conquer. We will be stronger. We will not be weaker, we will not be attached.

And again one asks: is the victor, the one who is stronger, actually imprisoned by the limitations of the worldview then? The limitations of what's allowed by a certain philosophy?

Beauty in art or in nature, music, emotions, narratives, selves—if we're always going to deconstruct these things, the beautiful, the artistic, the lovely music, the emotions, the narratives, the selves, if these are always deconstructed, that is silly. I think that's silly.

Sometimes we have other ends. We have other wants, other desires. We want our sense of whatever this thing is to open up differently rather than just that we don't feel weak in relation to them, that we don't feel attached in relation to them. We want, for example, a sensing with soul, with everything that comes with that—the meaningfulness, the beauty, the dimensionality, the divinity, the duty, all of that.

Not too long ago, I was practicing with a friend, and this perception opened up somehow of interstellar rocks, or the kind of fragments of rock that you might find in Saturn's rings—little lumps of everything from granular molecules all the way out to little rocks. And that vision, and then of my body and her body as made up of stone, if you like. So it was a sensing the soul into the earth element, into the element of solidity.

Usually when that meditation on the four elements is given in a Theravada context, it's for the sake of deconstructing the body and making us unattached, or in the service of less attachment to the body and the physical form of the body and what happens to the body. So again, it's like Marcus Aurelius—we don't want to be weak in relation, we don't want to be overpowered by an attachment to that, so we reduce, we employ a mode of looking. That's the four elements meditation found in the Satipatthana Sutta, but usually the way it's taught, it disenchants and unattaches.

This sensing with soul of this cosmic earth element and the stone element in me, the earth element in me and in my friend, was not, however, lacking in holiness. It wasn't flat. There was a dimensionality there. And I stayed with it—I was really struck by it. It was as if the stone had its own soul and it had its own subjectivity and it had its own intelligence.

If you've listened to the Eros talks, I think I described how that kind of intersubjectivity and recognition of soul in the beloved erotic object will open out to a sense of soul there, a sense of subjectivity there, a sense of intelligence. There's a particular kind of intelligence and a particular kind of seeing. What is it to see

and to sense existence as the stone senses it?

The holiness was there, the dimensionality was there. It wasn't a flattening and a deconstructing that took away that enchantment. So there's something similar there perhaps to some tantric or vajrayana meditations on the elements—very different meditations, very different orientation and relationship with the earth element or the water element or the fire element. Its holiness is there. Its holiness is amplified. It's more than just flat.

So sometimes we might want to be, as Marcus Aurelius puts it, greater than something, not weaker than something, not attached to something, not subject to something so much. But sometimes we want sensing with soul. And sensing with soul, as I pointed out at some point near the beginning of this course, sensing with soul involves humility. It's not about being greater than, not being weaker than. There is a sense of this thing, this beloved other, this thing that I am perceiving, sensing, is somehow bigger than me. Sometimes we want that.

Again, we're talking about the ways that we can very easily become imprisoned by certain ideas, certain teachings, certain traditions, or takes on teachings, or takes on traditions. And some of this happens in really gross ways. I've heard about certain teachers or authorities in some situation being really quite aggressive and angry even with a student, perhaps in a one-on-one situation or in a small group or in a group of teachers, really aggressive in a kind of anti-religious way, or certainly what we might call anti-soul or anti-spiritual, anti-transcendent kind of approach.

thrust, and I wonder why the aggression, why the anger in this insistence that anything called the unfabricated is rubbish, or that it only confuses people, or that there's just this world, just this flat materiality. They wouldn't use the word "flat," but it's what we might call flat. Why the anger? Why the violence? Why the aggression?

Sometimes what's communicated is conveyed in a very aggressive way, with the throwing around of power or the exertion of power. As we said earlier, questions of epistemology, as Guy Moscovici wrote, are questions of social order. Questions of epistemology, ontology, and cosmology are questions of social order and hierarchy.

So sometimes there is this very obvious use of one's power position to insist on this or that take on epistemology, ontology, cosmology, reality. What's going on there? Is it a personal thing or an ego thing? Like one feels lacking? I don't know. Lacking because one hasn't had certain experiences that other people have? Or is it something else—this kind of grasping at a certain world, a certain cosmology, which is actually more important than anything else, more important than freedom itself? One is grasping at cosmology.

So I'm curious: what goes on? I don't think it happens that much, but when it does, why the anger? Why the pushiness? Why the throwing about of one's power? Why the aggression?

Most of the time, the ways we are affected by these ideas are much more subtle, and the ways we become imprisoned are much more subtle. It's simply that we haven't considered the ways those ideas are influencing us. We haven't considered them fully. We haven't questioned them.

For example, when I was discussing science and its attitude toward emotion—the way emotions were devalued in that epistemology—I contrasted it with my friend's experience of sensing the soul of the moon in an emotionally vulnerable state. That kind of epistemological idea that we absorb, either from science or sometimes from dharma contexts, or the notion that imagination plays no role and has no epistemic value, contrasts sharply with Pauli and Jung's conversations and their beginnings of a theory that actually gave place to archetypal imagination in epistemology and the construction of reality.

But the point is, these ideas work subtly. We don't consciously trace the fact that we tend to dismiss a perception that happens when we're feeling, say, a lot of grief, and we don't give it epistemological validity. We don't trace that dismissal back to the scientific revolution. But it's quite subtle, the way that works.

We've been talking about atomism as well. We may have imbibed that from the tradition. But you might be a practitioner who is not really into a kind of dharma practice and meditation that has any atomistic, reductionist, process view. That's not how you view things. You may be more of a practitioner who's into a warm, kind, open being with the emotions in the body and the connection there. Regarding that: this is what is happening. This is what I'm asked to be with, to meet, to see as it is, to open to.

This is what is happening. This is what is arising for me now—these emotions in the body, this mind state. And then being with the breeze on the cheek when walking outside, or the taste and sight of food. And then maybe there's an opening to nature connection with the food, the soil on the carrots and all that. And all of this is conceived of as what is. All of this is what is, and what one needs to address.

And still the question remains: why limit the life world? Why limit that as the range of what one pays attention to? Why is that worthy of attention or considered real over and above, say, my friend sensing the moon in a certain way? You understand? This is real because it's real—it's an emotion, probably connected with my history, and I feel it in the body. The soil is real, and the carrot and potatoes, and the breeze is real as a sensation.

There's a limit to the life world, a limit to the appearances and experiences that are worthy of paying attention to. Implicit in all that is an epistemology and an ontology. These are considered real, these are considered worthy of attention, and this is how I can relate to them and know them.

That's much more subtle—where we've got that kind of limitation in terms of the scope of the life world, the epistemology, the ontology. It operates more subtly, and we're not even quite sure where we've gotten those ideas from. Often what happens is there's a combination of influences into how we practice, how we think of practice, and how that affects our life. There's the encouragement to deconstruct in this

reductionist, atomistic way that we described. There's the absence of any...

There's the absence of any conceptual place for or encouragement of eros, or even the discerning of eros. There's this notion repeated over and over about "what is" and being with things as they are, or being with what is. All of that together may then have, for example, an impact on how we might relate to something like music and the arts.

With this emphasis on deconstruction and no notion of eros, when we're simply concerned with the idea that "what is" is important, we might listen to music, we might even enjoy music, but there's not really a conceptual opening out of the possibilities for music or art. There's no positive place for art or music in this framework. Music might even be regarded dismissively—perhaps new age music is acceptable because it's calming, and maybe that can serve some purpose. But what's the real point of music if we're buying into, or if we've got the constant pull in the background of this emphasis on deconstructing, reductionist, atomistic worldview, with no place for eros and this emphasis on just "what is"? What can't really open now are all the arts.

I'll return briefly to Michel Foucault, who points out quite interestingly in his book *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that we can say we enter the modern age—the history of truth enters its modern period—when it is assumed that what gives access to the truth, the condition for the subject's access to the truth, is knowledge and knowledge alone. Truth becomes simply something you either know or you don't. If you acquire the knowledge, then you know what's true.

As he explains, this occurs when the philosopher or scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth, can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself through his acts of knowledge alone, without anything else being demanded of him and without his having to alter or change in any way his being as a subject. What he means is that it used to be that to have access to the truth, you would need to engage in spiritual practices. You would need to purify your being ethically, intentionally. You'd need to purify your mind. You'd need to work on yourself and your capacity, your ability to actually know the truth. Then something happens and we enter the modern age when it just becomes about whether you know or you don't. You don't need to work on yourself in any way.

This is also interesting in how it translates to Dharma. For a kind of Dharma that essentially—what I might call existentialist Dharma—equates practice with coping with the tragedy of the real world, the impermanence, our existential predicament, Dharma practice essentially becomes coping with that. That's the view of Dharma. There's very little truth to be discovered or ascertained or arrived at that we don't already know, that's not already obvious, and certainly none that requires a difficult course of practices, purifications, and spiritual exercises. Just what we see—for the most part, maybe the self is a process, everything's connected to everything else, but it's not that hard to see. Mostly it's just this existential predicament that is said to be obvious to everyone, and that's what you practice: coping with that in some way.

Truth is still assumed here as the evident reality that one must relate to and cope with. It's just evident what truth is. I would read the Pali Canon as insisting rather that the Dharma is predicated on the difficult practice of gaining insight into reality and truth. That's what the Buddha means by insight into the nature of reality—it's a long journey, it's hard, and it's rare for someone to really go deep in that. Some modern interpretations of the Dharma simply say no, Dharma practice is just coping with this obvious reality of impermanence and the toughness of our existential predicament.

So we have one perspective that has truth with some kind of metaphysical status of objectivity—we can do all these difficult spiritual practices and gain access to the truth that's hard to see, that's concealed from us by our *avidya*, by our impurities. And the other view is that truth is obvious and practice is learning how to relate to that, how to cope with that.

What happens, I want to ask, what happens to either of these perspectives when truth, or the idea of truth, loses its metaphysical status of objectivity? There is no objective truth that I'm going to arrive at, either because it's pretty obvious anyway and it's just what everyone agrees on in our modern world, or because it's some kind of transcendent, unfabricated reality. What happens to either of these perspectives when the idea of truth loses its metaphysical status of objectivity? And what happens, too, to the notion of care of the soul? This is actually what Foucault's book was about—how knowledge and care of the soul go together so that if we have knowledge of the truth, we're caring for the soul.

In the kind of existentialist, coping approach that I just described, which is quite popular these days in some circles,

What does care of the soul mean? It means learning to cope with the obvious truth. If I learn how to cope—developing the attitudes, reflections, and stances that allow me to navigate this obvious truth and the difficulty of our existential predicament, the tragedy of impermanence—then that learning to cope becomes caring for the soul, caring for the self.

In the transcendent or spiritualist approach, care of the self includes practices that allow the discovery of liberating truth. Because in that view, when I see that transcendent unfabricated reality—that truth which is obscure and requires difficult practice to perceive—when I see that truth, the knowing of it serves to care even more deeply for the self.

So there's care for the self in coping, and that's the limit of self-care in one paradigm. In the other paradigm, there's some coping and development of various capacities, but then seeing the truth becomes the ultimate care for the self. Because that truth liberates me and takes care of me. Or rather, knowing that truth takes care of me—the wisdom that emerges from it, the attitudes, the non-attachment that flows from it.

So I want to ask: what happens to either of these perspectives when truth loses its metaphysical status of objectivity? And what does care—self-care—mean when the self is realized to be empty and not knowable

as it is, but dependent on the perspective and way of looking?

We're not saying there is no self. We're saying there are multiple perspectives on what the self is. And what is this self that I'm caring for? Is it the soul as we're discussing? Is it a process? Is it the frightened human being daring to look at the existential predicament and its facticity?

How do these conceptions of Dharma transform when we realize the emptiness of truth, the plurality of truths? And when we also realize that no self-view—no particular conception or perception of self—is ultimately true?

This whole question about knowledge and what it means to care for the self is what Foucault's book traces through history. These are things we care about, wrapped up in Dharma practice. What does it mean to know? What does it mean to care for ourselves, to care for our life? And what does it mean when we open up the notion of truth, see its emptiness, and embrace a plural understanding of truth? When we see that any particular self-view won't be the real, ultimately true take on the self?

To me, when we're no longer gripped by the view of singular objective reality, and when we're no longer caught in believing there's a particular view or conception of self that is the real one, then possibilities open up. The whole realm of our possibilities for practice, for thinking, for perception, for sensing, for exploring becomes available.

One way we can think about care of the self is as care of the soul—in our sense of the word—which means soul-making, because that's what the soul cares most about. We can view care of the self in this way, and we can view knowledge and truth as participatory.

Can we be aware of and understand how ideas of the real—ontological and epistemological assumptions, beliefs, commitments—come into our practice to shape, limit, and direct it? How they influence what practice can be, where it can go, what it can do for us, and what it can open? How they enter our life and experience?

These ideas shape and influence our experiences, our very sense of things—of world, self, others, existence. In that shaping and influencing, they either limit or open, or they limit in certain ways while opening in others. Can we see, recognize, be aware of, and understand this influence of ideas regarding reality?

Jean Baudrillard, the modern French philosopher, said, "The map precedes the territory." Our conceptual frameworks, our ideas, shape the actual landscape we create—the territory we then find ourselves traveling through and experiencing. I can go with that, though it might be somewhat extreme as a view.

There's another writer, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who writes about epistemic colonialism and epistemicide. He says: "Let's enlarge the present and the space of the world. Let's travel with crude maps. Between theory and action, there may be correspondence, but there is no sequence."

Between theory and practice—between our ideas and conceptual frameworks and how we practice, how we experiment with perception—there may be correspondence, but there is no sequence. He's not as extreme as Baudrillard's "the map precedes the territory." There's a give and take in our practice of sensing the soul. Ideas shape perceptions, shape the sensing.

The sensing that we experience also calls into question ideas, opens them, expands them, suggests new ones.

Isn't that exactly what we're talking about when we describe the soul-making dynamic as the mutual involvement and dialogue and enriching and interpenetration and impact of Eros, Psyche, Logos? Enlarging, being enlarged. The logos—the idea, the concept, the ideas, the conception—influencing the perception, the psyche, what we call the image of things. And the images, the perception of things, the psyche influencing the logos. Included in that is our affect, our emotions, and how they color and push and influence and open different doors, shining different perspectives. The desire and the eros—all of that is included in the way this works, in the way that the territory then opens up, in the way that we discover the territory and construct our maps as we're going. So that could be what Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes—could be a kind of metaphor or encouragement for what we're doing as well.

I haven't focused too much on the direction in relation to all this from the emptiness point of view. But either with—or both with—understanding emptiness very deeply for oneself in practice, the emptiness of all phenomena, and actually that understanding being digested, going deep, maturing and affecting one's outlook and gaining confidence in that perspective. So either with that, or both with that and with this brief sort of questioning or poking a little bit or critique or opening up of these perspectives—ideas that have influenced us: epistemological ideas, ontological ideas, metaphysical ideas, hermeneutic ideas, both socially in terms of their social aspects and their philosophical aspects.

Either from what we've been talking about over the past few hours, or from the emptiness perspective, or even with both—hopefully, or my hope is—that will help create a little more space for us, and a sense of freedom, possibility, legitimacy, to explore this sensing the soul and the range that's possible there. And create, also discover, a kind of ground—a different ground philosophically, in terms of our beliefs and thoughts and ideas—on which it can rest, this sensing the soul.

From here, I hope that some of that is helpful, or at least sprinkles some seeds that may be helpful later on. And then we can go on now to look at specific practice possibilities and the relationship with ideas and how they open up the possibilities in practice.

Let's stop there for now.

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