# The Spreading of Five Wings

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 14:53

Good morning, everyone.

You've probably got the sense already, the understanding or the feel, that these explorations and this kind of paradigm that we're exploring and presenting has as one of its key features and characteristics a tendency to expand and to want to expand into different arenas, domains, and reaches.

When there was a question and I said, "Well, in a way, if I had to sum up really briefly, what's the point of all this? Why are we doing it?" I would put that in the language of expanding, opening up further and further the senses of sacredness. So this idea of possible expansion, possible growth, is a feature characteristic—intrinsic almost—with possibilities of extensions, reaches, and ranges expanding in different aspects and domains. You've probably kind of got that sense already.

Soul is—you could say there's something very organic here. It's really like a living thing that wants to grow, like a tree or something else. And so this notion of, or fact of, wanting to expand, or at least the potentials to expand, is really key. So you've probably got that sense already.

This morning I want to draw together, under that rubric of expansion and range, five domains of possible expansion, possible extension of range. And then we won't have time to go into all of them, so we're just going to pick two to explore in a bit more detail. But let me go through them quite briefly. Actually, all this has already been said, but it might be good to think of this—put them all together as a list of five under the idea of possible ranges, and where am I with those possible ranges.

So the first is the whole idea of the elements of the constellation or the lattice. We might feel—you might feel—in your practice that so far you've got a really good sense of, or it feels like a very alive and rich sense of, some of those elements. They really make sense to you, you've experienced them, they've even opened up in ways that were unexpected. But others of them are a bit cloudy or even still relatively inert. Nothing has really happened there at all. They haven't really illuminated.

So there's no right or wrong in this, but there is this—let's call it an intrinsic potential or even an intrinsic eros that soul has—to reach out and open up and illuminate more and more of these nodes. So part of the investigation is, and we'll come back to this, where am I in my soul's opening out to a sense—an experiential sense and also an understanding—of these elements. Okay, so that's the first one in terms of a domain of possible expansion and increase of range in practice.

The second one—I could go in any order here, but the second one, again, I've mentioned all of these before, but just to collect them together from a certain angle in terms of this idea of expansion and

possibility and where I am—the second one is the expansion along the axes of the soul-making beginning to involve, infect, infuse self, other, and world.

Actually, in any moment of perception, any moment of any kind of perception at all, there is always some sense, no matter how subtle or vague, of some kind of subjective sense, some kind of self-sense, some kind of objective sense, and some kind of world sense. And these three can feel very separate or very hard, or kind of much more connected and open, but still that triad is absolutely intrinsic to any moment of perception: self-other-world.

And the question for soul-making is: what are the perceptions of self-other-world at any time? But in terms of expansion, possibility and range, what do I notice here, perhaps? Do I have a tendency for the other—the object, for example—to be where all the erotic, imaginal coming alive is at, and not so much the self? Or I don't really let it spread to the world, or perhaps the other way around. I'm so taken with the way I come alive as an imaginal subject, and I can kind of fall in love with it. There's nothing wrong with that at all. It's really a question of balance. Are the waters of soul flowing in these three directions? Does it make sense? Or is one of them—does it tend to be a bit lopsided, and if so, which way? People will differ, and it differs over time.

But actually, I'd like to add one more element into that, which is eros. So self, other, world, eros. And you could say eros is a part of myself. It's an aspect or an energy or force in myself. But again, the question is: what tends to become quite fully and vividly and richly and erotically imaginal for me of those four, and which maybe tends to get missed? Like my own eros—has that become for myself an erotic, imaginal object at times? Can it? What would that mean?

Again, it's simply one way of thinking about territory and range and possibility—just examining my tendencies and patterns. What are the places where I might harbor an unconscious belief that it's somehow not good to venture there?

That's the second dimension.

The third involves the eros-psyche-logos dynamic itself. Here, when soul-making is allowed to unfold naturally, when eros is permitted to inseminate and fertilize and gather momentum, all these elements get drawn into the vortex of soul-making. They become involved, whirling around each other, reflecting one another, inspiring and inflaming each other further until the whole constellation grows richer, wider, and deeper.

The question for gentle reflection here is: What range is possible for me with each of these? For instance, am I somewhat reluctant to let eros become really strong? Perhaps it feels too intense and I'm uncertain about it, so my range of eros—from quite subtle to really intense and powerful—becomes truncated. Or perhaps it's not fear but simply habit; my energetic being and desire body haven't yet developed the habit of becoming inflamed, so eros inhabits only a certain range.

The opposite can also occur—where everything becomes super-intense all the time, like a perpetual raging fire. Yet eros can be extremely subtle. It may be sexual or non-sexual; sexual eros is just one variety. But is there a tendency or pattern, conscious or unconscious, toward only the intense side of eros's range? There's tremendous potential for working with really subtle eros—extraordinarily subtle.

The same question applies to logos and the full spectrum of their ranges.

These three together constitute the third dimension.

The final two dimensions relate to what we might call neuropsychological dynamics. The fourth involves the spectrum of apparent pathology, dukkha, madness, violence, or weirdness. This range extends from what most people in society would consider really strange and psychologically suspect—quite weird and dark—all the way to experiences that seem completely free of dukkha, obviously pure and light and sweet, traditionally angelic in the narrow sense.

Where do I stand with this spectrum? What are my tendencies? How open is this range for me? How comfortable am I with it? Do I relate to it with fear or preference? Or perhaps it simply reflects that souls are different, and images naturally reflect what's occurring in our lives.

This represents another possible range to investigate—simply noticing what arises when I consider these territories.

The fifth and final dimension concerns the range of energy body texture—the felt sense of the energy body from very ethereal, luminous, and insubstantial, with that lovely gossamer, filigree quality that's light and delicate, to something much denser and more solid. What are my typical tendencies or patterns here? What doors might I be closing on certain parts of this range for various reasons that don't accurately reflect my more natural soul expression? Or perhaps this simply reflects how my soul naturally tends to inhabit this range.

These five ranges offer territories to bear in mind and explore gently—examining responses, reactions, inclinations, desires, tendencies, fears, and uncertainties around each spectrum.

I should mention something about the second dimension—the self-other-world-eros dynamic—that's come up in interviews and Q&A sessions. For the self to become imaginal, it doesn't need to be a figure in an image. You might have an imaginal figure simply doing its thing,

their thing in their own world and a person thinks, well, shouldn't I be in the image as well? Not necessarily—maybe, maybe not. Maybe it responds to you in your meditation, maybe you enter the image and become a figure in the image, but maybe not. What will happen in the infinite echoing and mirroring, and in the way this image mysteriously speaks to you even if you don't understand, is that it starts to infuse into the self-sense. Either right there in meditation or probably in other ways. Then the self-sense in life can become imaginal.

We get the sense that images are asking. We are born from images as opposed to images being born from us. Images ask something of me. We play with the idea that my deeper identity is somehow from the image. From the image I am expressing an image or images. I am asked by images to be their face in the world somehow, and that face is usually not literal. It's refracted in very subtle ways. You understand?

So in terms of the self, other, world, eros dimension, don't put that—how that might open up the range in terms of self—it's not necessarily so tight and obvious. Okay? Is that everything?

Okay, so that's the general introduction. We're only going to have time, as I said, this morning to pick two of those and explore them. But bear them in mind, this list of five, if you go on with this kind of practice, as just something you might want to let yourself explore at different times.

So Catherine's going to introduce how we're going to explore two of those lists of five.

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