Dimensionality, Humility, Duty, and Love

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This evening, I'd like to make a few brief general points about the nodes of the lattice—about what we call the elements of the imaginal. Then I want to move on to explore some ramifications of what we discussed regarding self, self-sense and imaginal self, self-becoming imaginal, examining how this relates to some of the nodes of the lattice, some of the elements of the imaginal.

First, let me offer a few brief general points about the nodes of the lattice, about these twenty-eight elements of the imaginal. Some of these I've mentioned before, but they bear repeating.

First, remember what the point of this teaching of the elements of the lattice is. It has two main purposes. One is discernment—clarity about what is or isn't imaginal in our sense, or what constitutes an image or a sensing with soul becoming more fully imaginal, more authentically imaginal in our language. This serves to aid conceptual understanding, but also helps in the navigation, in the steering. What openings am I trying to encourage or lay the conditions for?

The second purpose of these teachings of the elements and imaginal nodes is that they can be used in practice. By noticing a certain element—for example, the sense of time or the sense of ontic status, the reality status—and actually paying attention along the lines of a certain element, that element can be ignited. We can notice something there, and that noticing and attention can ignite that element, thus allowing the image to become more imaginal.

In igniting that element—whether it's the element of eternality in terms of temporality, or the element of theatros, or imaginal way, or whatever it is, or love, or beauty, eros—that igniting can ignite other nodes. Sometimes it's simply a matter of paying attention and noticing: "Oh, I am loved here. I didn't notice it before. It doesn't fall into the usual appearance of what I tend to think love looks like, but there is love there. Let me pay attention to that and feel that." It might be quite subtle, a really different manifestation. In the noticing, it brings it more alive, becomes more prominent, ignites, and then the other nodes follow.

But it's also possible to deliberately ignite a certain node just by deciding to or by jiggling, wiggling it in a certain way. For example, with energy body awareness, we can always reopen that, spread that with awareness in the space and environment of the body, fill that with sensitivity and presence, and notice if there's an image of the body. That's actually deliberately igniting that node, and that can have an effect. So sometimes through noticing, sometimes through deliberate tweaking, jiggling.

This teaching serves a double purpose: conceptual clarity and conceptual differentiation from other experiences or paths that may overlap or be similar—the conceptual understanding, understanding the

conceptual framework and logos, and the navigation—and secondly, that it's actually helpful in practice, either by noticing an element or deliberately doing something there.

Just check in yourself if your understanding or your relationship with this teaching of the elements has only included part of these purposes. Either you've forgotten that one can actually use it in practice as part of the art of practice, part of the alchemy, and you're thinking more in terms of definition. Or sometimes a person reports, "Yes, I've had that one, I've had that one," as if they're things to collect as opposed to engage and work with.

My second point is that there's no real order, no uniform and regular order in which these nodes or elements ignite. What this means is that in the art of our practice, we can be opportunistic. Which ones can I notice? Which ones may be available to my engagement, to my activity, to my subtle responsiveness, to my turning them on? But it might happen in any order. There's no linear, predictable, formulaic order in which these nodes need to be engaged or noticed or played with and in which they tend to ignite. Anything can happen in any order.

Another point: they're all connected. All these elements are connected. It's hard to start talking about one without it beginning to spill over into talking about another one, or a group of them tend to go together. So they're all connected. There is overlap. They're concepts with soft and elastic edges. They're fuzzy. They're interconnected.

The nature of that interconnection is sometimes one of tension—not paradox so much as opposition. They're pulling in different directions. For example, the autonomy of an image may be...

pulling in a different direction than the fact of it being created, but that we're engaged in creating, partly. So sometimes there's a kind of opposition, but they pull in different directions. And that's part of the tension or maybe paradox or mystery of the imaginal—this sensing the soul.

Sometimes two nodes overlap or seem to imply each other so that they are close in meaning or overlapping in meaning. Dimensionality and unfettered mobility, for instance—not exactly the same, but they relate very much. Eros and beauty... we could analyze them all and look at the kinds of relationships between the nodes, but there's a general point there.

I want to take this opportunity now to make a couple of corrections or revisions to the list of the elements. One has to do with "not reduced to one meaning." I would like to add: not reduced to one meaning *or one causal explanation*. We've touched on this before, but if I tend to think, "Oh, this image is here because of A, or because B"—because it's representing my personal power, or my compassion, or some wound from childhood—that may be part of an understanding of the causal explanation of why this image is arising.

But if we reduce it to just that causal explanation, whatever it is, then we're limiting the image, limiting the possibilities of the image, and amputating parts of it. It will lose some of its life, depth, breadth, resonance, and power. So that element we can now say is: not reduced to only one meaning or only one

causal explanation.

The second correction has to do with two-ness, which we could expand to say: two-ness, differentiation, or retaining particularities. Sometimes the image arises here, in my body—I become, my body and my sense of self become the image, like the tree that I shared as an example briefly in one of these talks. It might then be that my sense of self as meditator splits out from it as image. That will always be there to a subtle sense because awareness is always in a dualistic relationship with its object.

But even more significant is the fact that it retains particularities. There's a particular tree with particular qualities, this tree—particular colors, particular shape, particular geometry, particular feel and aesthetic presentation. Retaining particularities also means it's not moving towards dissolution, melting, oneness—a kind of loss of features, loss of form, fading and loss of features and form.

That is certainly part of soul-making in the larger sense, in terms of the beautiful directions that the soul and consciousness can experience and explore. But in terms of imaginal work, mostly we say it retains particularities, differentiation, and sometimes the sense of two-ness.

Those were the brief general points about the nodes, about the elements. As I said, I want to pick up some of the threads of what we were talking about in relation to self-sense and self as image and self-becoming image, and unfold some of the ramifications there with respect to some of the other nodes.

Implicit in, or even obvious in, a lot of what we were talking about regarding self and angel out ahead and daimons is a sense of dimensionality. It's interesting hearing back from people which nodes make sense to them and which make sense much less. Sometimes someone reports, "I don't really understand this dimensionality node." Actually, a couple of people reported that.

So it may be that a better word is *depth*. When I hear "dimensionality," I think of an x-axis, a y-axis and a z-axis, or length, breadth and width—as if there's some kind of rectangle there at right angles to each other. So maybe a better word is depth, in the sense that the image or the sense of this object has a depth dimension. It has a sense of more-ness to it, of beyonds, of other levels of being, other planes of existence in it, other mysteries within it that are either directly connected or intuitively sensed, dimly, vaguely sensed.

Someone else wasn't quite sure what dimensionality meant, and they found it helpful when I explained one way you can understand it: the idea or concept of the image of, for example, a human being or an action as being the projection or emanation or refraction of the image of an angel. This image is a refraction of an angel, or this human being that I'm seeing now is an emanation, a projection, a refraction of an angel—the embodiment of an angel who exists at another level, so to speak, with another dimension.

Within that—and I'll come back to this—to realize that the human or the self or the action or the duty that's involved can never be a perfect or exact replica of the angel. That's why I use the word refraction, which means when light hits water, it's slightly bent a certain way. It's the same ray of light, but it's given

a kind of spin by the water. So the angel is given particular spins by the human being, or the image. It's not a perfect one-hundred-percent mirroring.

That's an important point we'll come back to in other contexts and to make other points in terms of implications for our life and our sense of what we value and what we're aspiring to. So a human being—we can have a sense of a human being as refracting an angel, as a refraction, a projection, an emanation of an angel. And that whole idea, just because the angel exists at another dimension, gives a sense, or is an example of a sense of dimensionality, or depth.

An intrapsychic image also can be the image of such an angel. And then the dimensionality is there. The more-ness is implicit in the whole space between the image and the angel. So this image maybe is not the angel—it's the refraction of the angel, it's an emanation of the angel.

The more-ness and the dimensionality is also in the kind of bottomlessness or unfathomability of the angel. And that's where the image gets its unfathomability from. It's connected to the unfathomability of the angel. And as we mentioned, a person, for example, can be the projection, the emanation, the refraction of many angels.

Contrary to some of the writings of Henry Corbin—and sometimes it's hard to say when he writes whether it's his teaching or his interpretation, a refraction of the teachings of these different Islamic mystics and scholars through the ages—some of what he writes makes it sound like there's one angel for each human being. We're saying yes, it might be one, it might be many more than one, with all the added richness and complexity and sometimes difficulty that brings. But Corbin was very prolific and was probably reporting on different traditions and teachings, so sometimes it might be this and sometimes that. It's not important for our purposes.

A person, we would say, can be the projection of many angels. For some people, just that idea might begin to give some entrance into the mode of dimensionality, some sense of beginning to understand that possibility. Of course it can open up in different ways other than that and more than that. But this is absolutely crucial, for many reasons. The sense of dimensionality so much rests on this. Again, we'll come back to it, and hopefully, if I get a chance to do those talks on ethics, we'll return to this.

But why is it important? If things are just flat, if things are all the same in terms of the level of their being, it doesn't feel very soulful, for one thing. It doesn't feel very rich and deep, because the depth or dimensionality is not there. But it also doesn't enable us in our life to have an anchor that's deep.

An anchor for our being when things are difficult or confusing, when we've lost our bearings—like a ship at sea, if the anchor that it puts down does not reach and find traction and connect with something of another substance other than water, the ship just drifts. It's the same for us as human beings. Without a sense of something of another level, of another dimension in all kinds of ways—existentially, psychologically, spiritually, soulfully—we drift. We lose our bearings, we lose our sense of

meaningfulness, orientation, steadiness, courage, all kinds of qualities.

Sometimes some ways of relating to the Dharma want to pin so much hope on mindfulness and the practice of mindfulness. There is a kind of anchoring as we come back to the breath or mindfulness, as awareness is different than its objects. But mindfulness is not really an anchor at another level. It doesn't have so much of a sense of dimensionality. Even if awareness is larger than objects and experiences, mindfulness is impermanent. It comes and goes. It exists in time.

An image or a sensing with soul has this implicit dimensionality, as we're teaching, that we can get a sense of. We can begin to notice it, begin to feel it, begin to feel its import and how that sense of dimensionality actually touches the being. The dimensionality there is something of another level. So when we need an anchor—when we're lost, when we're confused, when we're agitated, when we're unsure morally, when we're in some kind of crisis, when the wind's blowing and swelling turbulently around our ship—then we need some sense of something of another dimension.

It's curious because the normal contemporary, the dominant contemporary way of understanding things is to try and find an anchor in some kind of solidity, some kind of obvious assurance or investment in money or house or this or that, a relationship. And of course, that does provide an anchor to a certain extent. Correspondingly, the dominant contemporary mindset and worldview would dismiss images and sensing with soul as being way too insubstantial, unrealistic, not really there to provide any kind of anchor.

But actually, because there is this sense of dimensionality, and that sense touches the soul—it touches the heart of the soul—it provides a better anchor because it's a different level. It's a different substance. It's not just water. It's something of a different material and a different level of being.

Of course, there are many kinds of anchors of a different level of being. The experience, for example, of cosmic or universal love—not so much my love, my metta, my self-love, but the sense of the universe and the cosmos being made out of love, being shot through with love, love being woven into the fabric of the cosmos. That's a perception of a different dimension of being than the usual habitual flatland view.

Similarly, the meditative sense or opening to a cosmic or universal awareness—not just mindfulness, but a universal cosmic awareness that holds everything, or that things really are in the depths of their being this awareness, this cosmic awareness. Both those examples, the awareness and the love, when you have the cosmic sense of them, there's a dimensionality and, as I've said many times in explaining things in these talks, there's usually for people some kind of sense of divinity with them. A practitioner opening in those kinds of ways starts to use the language of divinity very often, even if they've never felt comfortable with it before.

So the dimensionality and divinity are there in those experiences. But neither of them, neither the cosmic awareness nor the cosmic love, include the personal—the necessity of my particularities and my unique

personhood.

So there's something about an anchor, about the kind of anchoring that images offer us—that is both a powerful anchor because it has another dimension, another level of being, another kind of substance to it, but also an anchor that includes the necessity of my unique personhood. It speaks to me uniquely. It's relevant to me. It includes my particularities and is resonant with and attuned to and tailored to my particularities.

But this principle of dimensionality and anchoring is very, very important. It makes such a difference in life, or it can make such a difference if the sensibility is allowed to open to it, if it doesn't dismiss it out of hand, close the eyes and the senses to that possible sense. If the sensibility is trained, it's right there.

As I said, these elements of the imaginal are really things to notice. It's almost like you just hang out and you start to notice, "Oh yeah, there is that sense, oh yeah." And these words that we're putting out for the elements are just sort of best efforts at kind of pinpointing or naming these aspects of the imaginal that are there waiting to be more clearly discerned and noticed.

The importance of this dimensionality struck me particularly while practicing in a dyad a little while ago. As I mentioned in the beginning talk, I hope that I can say a little bit about dyad practice. Dyad practice has all kinds of levels. So far in the recorded teachings, we've just put out very basic dyad practice or triad practice—this very basic sort of almost exercise-like aware of the energy body, aware of the emotions, speaking that and receiving it, then sharing an image, maybe seeing the other as angel. But people have really loved it and gone for it.

Hopefully, we'll return to dyad practice and add a bit. People have asked me, and I think I've said in response, there are other levels where the dyad itself can be full of eros. It's implicit in seeing another as an angel, in fact, and being seen as an angel. The other person can become image for me right now, and I can become image for them right now in the present moment, and that's what we're practicing with, what we're engaging together and sharing together and talking about together and opening together.

Sometimes that eros can be non-sexual, and sometimes it can be sexual. We've expressed caution about doing that kind of practice just because of how much eros can arise, and sometimes how much sexual eros can arise, and the necessity to be a little bit careful. It's like, okay, what are the conditions of my life? Do I have monogamous obligations here, that there's so much eros in this dyad now that I'm a little bit in danger of acting out in a certain way, which will also potentially break the eros in the dyad anyway? All kinds of issues that cannot even handle that energy.

So we've been deliberately holding back about those kinds of teachings, or that level of teachings of dyad practice, but it's there, and maybe at some point we'll release more teachings about that.

Anyway, that was a long prelude and caution to say that I was practicing in a dyad with someone, we were looking at each other, and there was a lot of eros there. There was romantic eros, if you like, in the

imaginal, the erotic imaginal. And the image of us as mystical husband and wife echoing, mirroring the emanation, the refraction of a kind of cosmic husband and wife. Very, very beautiful, and the sense of all the elements were alive as it became fully imaginal.

But what struck me at this point was the sense of participation. There was a sense of this experience now, and this image now, or this sensing with soul now—so my sense of her, my sense of us—being retained. The forms were retained, but there was a sense of these being echoes, refractions of us at a higher level, an angelic level, a cosmic level, whatever language you want to use. And of course in that, then this level, this human level and the sense of it in opening to that kind of sensing with soul is that we are participating, participating in the image which has higher roots, roots in divinity.

So the element of participation was very strong, and grace and eternality—this cosmic husband and wife and their eros and their love and their bond, always already happening. And the human experience can open to that, enter into that, and participate in it.

This element of participation, I think, is one of the deepest and most important of the imaginal. But with that sense of participation and grace and the eternality was a real sense of privilege that really touched my soul. And in a way, I felt that very often, but it felt more clear to me, and partly perhaps because of my health situation, my probably dying soon, that all three of those nodes—the participation, the grace, and the eternality, but particularly the participation and the privilege of participating—privilege of participating in this cosmic image, of somehow being part of that, participating in a theophany, in a face of divinity, in something, in an image that has roots in divinity.

And that privilege gave me, really, I could feel it, its impact on the sense of dying and on the relationship to death. So that when there's that kind of sense of privilege, even if it only lasts a few minutes or seconds even, something is touched so deeply and so one really recognizes, "I've drunk from a treasure here. I've drunk from a deep and infinite well. And somehow I am part of that. I've recognized that I am part of that."

It changes the sense of one's being.

So this enormous sense of privilege and recognizing, changing the sense, the relationship with death, recognizing—you know, a long life. I still feel quite young. If I die soon, I'm dying young. But recognizing with this really profound sense of privilege touched my heart and soul so deeply, a long life is not so important. A long life without that sense of privilege and participation and how that touches the being and what it says about one's being and about one's existence, even if one struggles to articulate that—a life without all that is not so great. A short life that includes times of touching or opening to those kinds of perceptions, those kinds of elements and senses, is worthwhile, is very okay.

I'm reminded of the Buddha, who said: better one moment of knowing the unfabricated than a hundred years of life without knowing the unfabricated. It's akin to that. So it really relativized the whole

relationship with death at that time.

It's not just that the eternality element was turned on, and therefore there's a different relationship with death, because death obviously is an ending in time, and where there's a sense of eternality, it sort of transcends that, or relativizes it. So this sense of dimensionality, participating in other dimensions, and the privilege of all that, the grace of all that—so potentially profound and impactful in our relationship to all the vicissitudes of our existence, including dying.

Now that's an example from dyad practice, but it might be all images and all sensing with soul actually have that same kind of opportunity in them—in the sense of dimensionality, in the sense of participation, in the sense of grace and eternality. There is this sense of privilege and it can really... there's potentially a sense of liberating, beautiful, fulfilling, meaningful.

That was an example from dyad practice, but maybe any image, any sensing with soul. It may be extra powerful when it's in relation to an actual physical human other, because then there is this kind of transubstantiation or filling out, dimensionalizing of this level of existence. It goes right to the core of our humanity. But I think it's there as a possibility and a potential opening, glimpse, taste in any sensing with soul. So you can hear that dimensionality is implicit, and sometimes we make it explicit in some of what we were talking about with regard to self the other night.

But let's follow on and touch on a couple of the other nodes.

Humility.

Humility, as we are using that word—a couple of things. Like I've said before, each of these nodes will expand in time as we experience it, as we fill it out, as the soul-making dynamic does its work and the dough gets kneaded and the fermentation happens and the richness and the complexifying and the deepening. Each node itself will also grow. Our sense, our understanding, our range of experience—each of the elements themselves will also gain dimensionality and meaning.

In our paradigm, when we use the word humility, it's in relationship. Humility is in the face of. It's humility before. In other words, in relationship with mystery and love and dimensionality and unfathomability and divinity.

More commonly in the dominant secular culture, humility just means a person doesn't think too much of himself, or maybe just daunted by something that they feel incapable of addressing or carrying out or understanding or whatever it is. It's a relative size thing, but it retains just a flatland dimensionality.

I was talking and listening to someone a little while ago about climate crisis and things like that. And it struck me a little while later, as I was thinking about the soul-making teachings, that although she had a sense of "I don't understand the complexity of this problem"—which is, you know, an appropriate response. It's so complex psychologically, economically, socially, politically, probably even complex in

terms of the Earth's geo-weather systems and all that. Or, you know, "What to do? What do we do about climate change? What can we possibly do? I'm just one person. It's such a huge issue. We're just such a small minority who seem to really want to engage and do something about it."

And so there's a kind of—we could call it humility there, but what was missing was, in the whole relationship, there was not the mystery, there was not the unfathomability, there was not the dimensionality and the divinity there. So I'm not even sure I would use the word humility in that case. But that too, you know, I felt like potentially there were whole other levels and possibilities and breadth to her whole relationship with the climate crisis that might be able to be opened if some of these other more imaginal elements can be opened, and particularly the sense of dimensionality, divinity, etc., which then would allow a different sense of humility in relationship to it.

So self, dimensionality, humility—these are all really, really key elements, and very much you can see how they kind of, as I said, they're connected. They have implications for each other. They weave into each other.

When we're talking about humility, it gets a certain spin sometimes in our contemporary secular culture, in the dominant culture at least, and it can be a kind of self-denigration or self-effacement or that kind of thing. So again, I hope this is obvious anyway, but the way we're using it is much more to do with, or much more includes a sense of healthy self-esteem. It's not in any way in opposition to that.

So that one can feel this kind of deep humility, a beautiful, rich, soft humility that, as I've said, is a humility in relationship to mystery, to love, to unfathomability, to dimensionality and divinity. And none of that has any implications or any offshoot into self-depreciation, self-denigration, self-worthlessness, and all that kind of stuff at all, so that we can even be proud, in the good sense, of our being and our direction and what we've done and how we are and what we're oriented towards and all of that, at the same time as we're humble. They're not in any way contradictory.

To quote Nikolai Hartmann, who I'll come back to several times—a German philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century for the most part—it would be a mistake to suppose that genuine pride, which he points out was for Aristotle in the ancient Greek teachings, the Hellenistic teachings, part of the makeup of a great soul, would actually have a healthy pride. There's nothing in that that excludes a genuine humility. The person who is justified in being proud will always, if they see themselves clearly, have something before which they humble themselves. But the humble person must always have something in himself which he prizes, if it's going to be a healthy humility and a genuine virtue.

I might have pointed this out before, but again, it's worth saying again, because we're talking about self and self-sense. So again, words like humility and even grace—they're often loaded words for us in this culture. And they can mean different things or be dependent on our past conditioning and our past associations with such words. They can be loaded problematically sometimes in different ways.

But with regard to sensing with soul in imaginal practice, those words and those attitudes, like humility—the attitudes to which, the poise, let's say, an attitude to which those words refer—

They can't be too self-weighted in the sense of being too focused on self, and certainly not on sin. This is one of the unfortunate associations or spins that such words as humility and grace have been given through what I would call a narrowing of Christian teachings over the millennia. Sometimes when people think of those words, they associate them with a sense of sin, worthlessness, feeling bad—and it's very selfie. The self that has them is a kind of very solid, heavy self. It's contracted, dense, and there's a tight fabrication of self there.

In our usage of those words, it's almost more fertile if the self-sense that feels humble is actually much lighter. Perhaps it exists in a certain region of the spectrum of self-fabrication. The self that's fabricated at the point of feeling the kind of humility that will be fertile as an element of the imaginal won't be a heavy, solid, weighty, contracted self that's somewhat self-obsessed. There's a certain region where there's a lighter self-fabrication. Again, this ties in with the node of slightly less fabricated.

In that region, the self-sense can still feel humility. There's a self-sense, there's form, but it's light, it's malleable, it's liquid. And in that region of lighter self-fabrication, there can still be a very poignant and moving and beautiful softening humility that is fertile in terms of the whole generation and reception of images. Outside of that range, there may not be that fertility. The imaginal perception won't work; the sensing of soul will be much less possible.

Again, we talk about self as possible refraction of angel. We talk about dimensionality, divinity, we talk about humility. But all of this actually needs to rest on or rest in a certain spectrum of self-fabrication that's not too heavy, too dense, too tightly fabricated. The order isn't necessarily linear—it's not that I have to lighten the self first. It might be that I lighten the self-fabrication, and then all kinds of possibilities open up imaginatively with the elements of the imaginal. Or it might be that they open up, and automatically in that there's an igniting of the slightly less fabricated node, and the self-sense lightens. So it's not necessarily linear, but wrapped up or implicit in our understanding of humility is, generally speaking, a slightly less fabricated sense of self.

I can't remember if I mentioned the possibility of actually starting with humility—starting even with the sort of light intention to be open and receptive to images, should they come, should they be born, should they be given. Actually starting with humility, where there's no image there yet. But still, if the self is not too solid, not too densely and tightly fabricated, and if my sense of other or object is not yet a formed image or a clear image, it can still be within that sense of a less solid self.

With that sense of a less solid self, there can be a sense of other, beloved other, that may be very vague. Some sense of the more-than-me that's unfathomable, that has mystery and dimensionality. That may be it—just some vague sense of other that's more than me, that's unfathomably deep, that's pregnant with mystery and dimensionality.

Just that stance, that poise, that openness with the self less rarefied, with a vague sense of other that's already pregnant with those more mystical and soulful qualities, and a relationship or poise of humility from the self in relation to that, in the face of that, before that—that may be, in a way, igniting the element of humility. Out of that beautiful crucible, an image may arise. And even if it doesn't arise, just to hang out in that space with the self not so solidified, just with a vague sense or mystical sense of the other that's more than me and unfathomable—that's a really beautiful place to hang out.

I don't have to demand an image. I don't need a clear visual image. It may come, it may not come, but just to be in that space is doing something to the soul. It's soul-making. We could say it's already imaginal just by virtue of those elements being alive in the vague sense of other. There's no clearly sensible image there, or delineated, or discernible, but in that vague sense, we could say that's already image.

Whether we call it imaginal or not, in terms of the soul and what it's stretching and opening and nourishing in the soul and the soil, the way it's enriching and caring for the soil, changing the soil of the soul—this is going to be very beautiful and soul-making and beneficial.

Again, if we just linger on this need for the self to be not fabricated as much or in the ways that it usually is, in relation to humility and the more-than-me and divinity.

I touched on one level of prayer being—I think it's the right word, I should really look it up in the dictionary—but prayer as supplication. I'm using that word to mean prayer as some kind of ask or request. People pray, humanity has done this forever: I pray to this god or that god for this or that, for the rains to come, for protection, for whatever it is, for healing.

It's interesting. Sometimes, and I think I pointed this out maybe in the Eros Unfettered talks, I can't remember when, but sometimes that very stance of asking for something—this self asking another, in this case God or the Buddha nature or some divinity or angel or whatever, asking for, wanting, hoping for, desiring something, maybe in my case desiring healing or whatever—

But the desire itself can be—can be, not always, but can be—a slightly problematic element. Because of dependent arising, we know that desire tends to fabricate. And it can fabricate more sense of self. So that the self-sense that's asking can actually feel, starts off already as feeling separate. I want—I as separate self want something from this separate other, or hope for something, or ask for something.

And because of the desire implicit, and the sense of separation, and the desire, the self-sense actually becomes, through the action of prayer, actually becomes more separate from the divinity. You understand? Because it's fabricated more, and partly what's fabricating the sense of self is a sense of separateness.

One of the possibilities in that kind of situation, if you're engaged in that kind of practice—you know, the beauty of prayer, and there's so many possibilities when we talk about prayer—but one possibility, if we've noticed that kind of thing happening, is actually to introduce a subtle idea, very, again, very

delicately introduced, a logos, that my wanting, my asking, or let's say my desire, is actually part of the divine desire.

So that my wanting, whatever it is, healing or this or that, that's not just mine. I'm already introducing a conception of it as part of the divine desire. Again, I'm participating in the divine desire. This desire of mine is somehow participating in the divine desire, in a divine desire. In introducing that logos, again, where we're not exacerbating the sense of self, we're changing the relationship and the conception with desire, and we're igniting the element of participation, among other aspects.

And then the whole sense of prayer can be a real, much more soulful experience and can open up in different sensings with soul, etc. The prayer itself, and of course that can spread to what's around you, or your sense of yourself, all of that.

So, less separation, because we're relating to the desire in a different way, instead of exacerbating the sense of separation and solidity of self, which can kind of frustrate or block the sense of prayer, actually, or block its deeper possibilities, deeper soul possibilities, let's say, in the soul sense of the prayer. Less separation when you introduce that kind of logos, that kind of subtle idea, and you introduce it subtly.

So again, these things are not to be clanked around with or kind of rammed in there or shouted in the mind, etc. There's really quite a delicate touch that's needed, especially in the realm of conception and logos, when we're working with that in the soul-making.

But because the sensing with soul then gets ignited more, then there's just much greater beauty. Beauty in the sense of prayer, beauty in the sense of self, beauty in whatever's around you, beauty in the sense of the divinity or the Buddha nature to whom you are addressing the prayer, with whom you are in relationship, etc.

But again, you can hear in all this, this dance that I was mentioning the other day, this dance of how much reification, how much fabrication to the sense of self. And we can play with it at different times. If it gets too solid, too tight, too real, too dense, too contracted, too fabricated, the sense of self, it will cut off the possibilities. If it gets too unfabricated, it will also cut off certain possibilities.

So if we want the soulfulness of prayer, for instance, in the sense of supplication, we need to dance in that middle ground with form and the liquidity. If we want the angelic dimension, the sense of refraction, projection, emanation from angels, the sense of participating in that, again, we need to dance in this territory where there's form and emptiness together.

Related—again, implicit in some of the ideas that we were putting out the other night about self and its relationship with angel, the angel out ahead, wrapped up in that, again, sometimes more implicitly, sometimes obviously and explicitly—is also duty and necessity or rightness.

So someone was sharing with me an image, and the image was of a hysterically grieving woman. It was a

very powerful image, obviously with a lot of energy in it, with the hysteria, etc. When we were talking about it, and I think it was obvious to her, even before I talked, or we drew it out in the conversation. But here's this hysterically grieving woman, and it does not feel right to imagine bringing her a cup of tea or a blanket or calming her down or giving her a Valium or whatever.

In some modes of working with the imagination, psychotherapy or perhaps other spiritual paradigms, I don't know, there is that sense of wanting to kind of rectify and normalize the image along the lines of the normal conceptions and assumptions and models that the normal level of mind has. But it absolutely—again, you just have to hang out with the imaginal to get the—to kind of don't buy into that immediate sense, oh, this is a pathological image, there's something wrong here. If there's something wrong with her in that image, it must mean there's something wrong with me, etc. Those kinds of immediate, often pre-programmed reactions and assessments of the mind just let that be and you get another sense that maybe less obvious at first but then comes more to the fore as you get used to it: no, there's something right about this and to step in and fix her you really recognize that that feels wrong.

So there's a rightness to the image, and sometimes with the rightness to the image, it's connected with our sense of duty. So duty, again, we touched on it in the talks about self, and the angels want something from us. And there's a whole range of what they might want and what that might imply for our lives, of course. But the rightness of the image has something to do, is connected with the duty, often. Or the duty, again, because implicit or explicit in some of those ideas about self and its relationship to angel or daemon is a sense of duty.

The particularities of an image which seem or feel important or the ones that feel soul-making, again, they often harbor or sometimes hide or sometimes indicate more obviously the sense of duty.

So there was an image that Yogi shared with me of a woman in the process of giving birth, of birthing, on a completely dried up, devastated landscape, a sort of almost apocalyptically barren landscape. And she was lying there and giving birth, birthing. And we were talking about this image, talking—I was asking her, is there... There's a two-ness there. Is it between... Well, perhaps the... She was asking me about the two-ness.

I can't remember how it came up, but anyway, is the two-ness between you and her, as it often is? There's the image as other, and there's a sense of self in the two-ness. Or is it between you and the landscape, or her and the landscape? Or, as we mentioned as one possibility the other night, can you see her as the woman so that the self and the image separate? Can you actually introduce that? Or is it the woman and the baby or the child inside her? Is that the two-ness?

The person's answer was very immediate, very quick: "No, it's the woman and the birthing itself." There's the sense of the two-ness there—the significant two-ness, the woman and the birthing. When she said that, it immediately gave me the sense that the woman knows that birthing is her duty.

So wrapped up in the sense of what felt like the significant dyadic relationship there—the woman and the birthing itself—and that immediately gave me the sense that this woman in the image knows that birthing is her duty because of the desolate, destroyed land. And it's her duty with all the dukkha it demands. She goes through, puts up with, meets and includes. Gently pointing that out to the practitioner, she recognized the soul relevance, the soul truth in that. It was very touching for us both.

In this case, from that sense of duty, then it might be that the sense of dimensionality and divinity opens up from the sense of duty. It can be. So as I said, all these elements are connected.

If we actually just linger a little bit on this question of duty, I started to wonder: does each imaginal figure herself, itself, himself—whatever—have a duty it's aware of? So we've talked so far about the duty being our duty in relationship to the imaginal figure, our duty given, if you like, by the angel, refracted into our life from the angel through our participation, through our interpretation, through our choices, because we retain autonomy.

But I started to wonder: does each imaginal figure themselves have a duty that it is aware of? And that duty of the imaginal figure is then refracted into a corresponding duty for the soul-making practitioner. And if that's the case, is it also that it's only more obvious with images that express in some ways a pathology or a dukkha?

So those solitary wanderers that I've shared and other people have shared—similar kinds of images of solitary wanderers—there's dukkha there, but they seem to have a duty to keep wandering and to be solitary to some extent or to a large extent. Or the images that I used to share: the evangelist, the soldier. Again, there's dukkha there—the burden of the battle, the difficulty, the relentlessness, the fatigue, the danger. Or the hysterically grieving woman, or this woman giving birth in a wrecked landscape.

I don't know. Perhaps every imaginal figure's duty is to be itself fully and somehow express that. So I'm just wondering about these things. I don't know.

And if we're talking about nodes and this sort of thing around duty and different aspects, someone asked—is necessity a node? I can't remember, or I was wondering. Maybe I was just wondering. I don't remember if someone else asked or if I was wondering. In other words, that this image feels it has to be this image. It's necessary.

I don't know the answer. Is that a twenty-ninth element of our lattice? I'm not sure. Perhaps. If it were, it would be paired—we talk about the relationship between different elements—it would be paired in opposition to the self's autonomy and the create aspect of the create-discover relationship. So "it's necessary, it has to be this" is in a slightly paradoxical relationship with the sense of "well, I'm creating it," or acknowledgment of creation.

I don't know the answer. We could perhaps include something like necessity as a twenty-ninth node, or it might already be woven up implicitly in the node of soul-making—that an image is soul-making. And for

soul-making, it has to have those resonances that are particular and, as I said, attuned, tailored to this particular soul and what's meaningful, what's right on the money, with this intelligent sort of addressing and speaking to my situation, my particular soul, my makeup. So perhaps necessity could be conceived of as part of the node of soul-making and soul-making resonances.

While we're on the subject, someone was asking about recognition, which again may be related to this necessity. Is recognition possibly an element? You know, sometimes, for instance, in that image I shared of the claim of the god of music on me, there's a kind of recognition. I recognize something that makes sense of an aspect or strands of my life and my struggles, my aspirations, my inspirations, et cetera. But again, recognition will then be related to infinite mirroring, to meaningfulness, to also humility, and perhaps also values, in a way, perhaps.

So I don't know about that. I'm not sure it's necessary to include or add another element. It seems to me implicit in the infinite mirroring and meaningfulness, and so forth.

Vulnerability was another element we suggested—I think I suggested it the other day, or perhaps someone else might have. It could indeed be an element. We talked about it the other day.

Or significance was another one—again, I don't remember if someone suggested it or if I thought of it. It doesn't really matter. There's clearly a sense of the significance of this image, the significance of this sense. But I don't know whether we need to add that to the list necessarily, because again, it's implied in the node of meaningfulness, it's implied in the node of infinite echoing and mirroring—that's why it's significant—and maybe implied in the node of duty.

I'm not sure. We wouldn't want the list of elements to get too unwieldy—twenty-eight is already a lot. On the other hand, as I said, I don't particularly want these teachings to be engraved forever in stone without the possibility of creative discoveries by others at some point.

But if we talk about humility and if we talk about duty, then, as I pointed out earlier with humility, and as I hope you get a feel for when we've been talking about duty over the years, that includes love. So again, there's this overlap or implication between the elements of the imaginal.

Let's talk just a little bit right now about the element of love. Love—loving and being loved—we said was one of the elements of the imaginal. One of the things that's important to realize is this love is not metta. Or rather, it's not just metta.

The love that imaginal figures have for us is not a universal love. It's particular to us. It may include metta, which is a universal love—metta is a universal love for sentient beings, universal in the sense that all sentient beings are included no matter what. Whereas the love that imaginal figures have for us might include metta, but actually, it's not universal. Rather, it's a kind of love of our uniqueness. They're rejoicing in, if you like—they're delighting in, they're loving, they're celebrating and expressing gratitude for our uniqueness and some particularity in us. And that's different than metta.

In metta, it doesn't matter how this person is different from that person, or even whether this person is in some ways more developed or better morally, or kinder, or more beautiful, or wiser, or more intelligent, or less. It doesn't matter. But a significant characteristic of the love that imaginal figures have for us is different—it is particular. It's not universal. It's not metta; it's more than metta. It may well include metta.

Neither is it an unconditional love like metta is. Metta is to all beings equally. No one deserves more or less metta. So it's universal in that sense. It's also unconditional, as what I was explaining before explains the unconditionality of metta as well. It doesn't matter. It's not dependent on, it's not conditioned by this or that quality in the being, or this or that behavior. So a pathological serial killer is worthy of as much metta as a Buddha in the teachings of metta.

But the love the imaginal figures have for us is not universal, and it's not unconditional love either, like metta is. Rather, the imaginal figures' love for us is, to some extent, contingent on us being a certain way, or acting, or choosing, or feeling, or intending, or sensing in some particular way which is dear to and somehow refracts those similar dispositions in the imaginal figure. Do you understand?

We could say the imaginal figure loves our potential, our kind of ideal being. This is significant because it's connected to duty, isn't it? They want something from us. They have an ask, a demand, a duty, and the love that they have is wrapped up with that. Sometimes they just celebrate our being, our sensibility, and sometimes they want us to be a certain way in the world.

And that way is somehow connected to their way, how they are. This is important to realize when we talk about love of imaginal figures for us, of being loved. As we've pointed out—and actually earlier even in this talk—that love can look really quite different from whatever perhaps more narrow models or ideas of love we have.

So it can look quite stern, quite fierce, quite demanding or taxing or all kinds of things. We've given many examples over the years, even the devouring, what seems violent. An image that eats me up and devours me, or cuts me up into little pieces. All this can be love, if I don't get pulled into my immediate, indoctrinated assumptions that my mind has. I start to see, "Oh, there is a kind of love here, and it's not the usual kind." But I have to train my sensibility, opening my sensibility and receptivity and my discernment to the range of what love can mean.

The love is not metta, it's not universal, it's not unconditional. I mean, it might include that as a stratum, but it's more than that.

I mentioned Nikolai Hartmann briefly. I want to return to him—if I get to do the talks on ethics, I will return to him. He talks about what he calls personal love, which is different than... He really means love of the being because you sense the image. You sense him, her, them as image. That imaginal level of the human being that you love, he calls the ideal, the personal ideal. I hope to explain that language a bit more when we get to the talks on ethics.

So there's what he calls the empirical personality, which just means what you actually sense, what you see. You see this form, you see that action, you see them be grumpy, you see them snap at someone, you see them be lazy or whatever it is at times. The empirical personality, he says, never strictly corresponds to its own ideal value, to the image.

When we love really deeply, we have, if you like, the imaginal sense of the other. Now, he tends to think there's just one imaginal sense—let's go with that for now, a bit like some of Corbin's interpretations of certain teachers. He calls that the ideal personality.

Since the empirical personality never strictly corresponds to its own ideal value, to the image, but love—in his sense, personal love—looks exclusively to the latter, to the image, to the ideal. The ideal is not some preconceived notion of how this person should be. It's a sort of intuitive sense of the angel that they're refracting, if we put it in our language. He's putting it in different language, different concepts. He doesn't use the language of images or even the idea of images.

So it adheres in the essence of personal love to pierce through the empirical person to his ideal value. You see through the everyday foibles and failings of this person. You also see the wonderful things that they do and their beauty, but you pierce through the empirical to the ideal value—meaning to the image, to their angelic nature and what they're refracting in their being there. This is at least its tendency, he says. Its commitment is to the ideal of personality, to that image.

"It lets that stand for the empirical individual, accepting him as equivalent to his highest possibilities, as raised to a power above his actual being. It loves in him what inheres in his essential tendency, the axiological idiosyncrasy of his ideal."

That fancy language just means his particular unique set of values and sensibilities that reside in his image. We are like we are—we have these kinds of values, these kinds of sensibilities, these kinds of directions, aspirations, propensities, the deep ones—because of the image that we are given, the image that we are refracting, the angel that we are refracting, that we are the refraction of.

"Not as an ideal, but as a trend towards actuality, just as if it were already actualized in him. For it, for this kind of love, the man as he is, in the trend of his, the preference of his ethos, of his being, is accepted as a guarantor of a higher moral being."

Again, he's using the word "moral" in quite a wide sense, but let's not go into that right now.

"Which of course he is not, but which only in him and nowhere else in the world finds something real that approximates to its own value."

So only in us, only in you, is there anything that's approximating that angel. Unique. And that's all we can do—that's the closest we can come to that angel, if you like, through the human. It's the closest it comes.

Personal love—meaning this fuller, deeper love that sees, that senses and loves what he calls the ideal

person in the other, or what we might call the image person—"personal love lives by faith in the highest that is within the loved one, which despite its inadequacy, love senses prophetically. Such love is ethical divination in the preeminent sense of the word," he says. The love of the ideal of a particular, meaning the image of a particular individual.

And he continues: "The distinctive power of all love which enters deeply into one's personal life is that it brings to light the otherwise hidden and neglected essence of one's individuality."

So this is a long passage and I'm taking my time reading it, but I'm mentioning all this because not only is this relevant to human-to-human relationships where we allow them to become intimate, to be enriched and to open out to the imaginal dimension—I've said this before, I think real love, deep love of another human being, includes them being imaged to us, and the love of that image, so that we're loving the whole spectrum of their being, the whole spectrum of the dimensionality of their being.

So he's talking about love of human to human, which I want to include, but right now I'm talking about the love of images for us. Because images love us in that sense—in the sense that he's talking about. "And the distinctive power of all love which enters deeply into one's personal life is that it brings to light the otherwise hidden and neglected essence of one's individuality."

It's as if these images, they look at us, they witness us, and they know us sometimes better than we know ourselves. And in their gaze and in their love, what is sometimes hidden and inaccessible within us is brought to light through their gaze, through their love. They know something that perhaps we're not in contact with. And it starts to activate and actualize those aspects of our being, if you like, the inner core of our being, the imaginal dimensions of our being, the images that we are, that we are refracting, that we can potentially refract, that we can choose to engage with more fully.

It brings to light and to life, I would say, the otherwise hidden and neglected essence of one's individuality.

He continues: "That this revelation can be achieved only in a life of another order than that of the empirical is because of the gulf between him"—between the empirical man and the ideal of himself and the image. So there's this separation. The image—that's why I use the word "refraction"—it can never be, as I said before, a complete one hundred percent faithful replica of the angel. He calls it the gulf between the empirical man, the actual manifestation, and the ideal, the image.

And then he continues: "The loved one feels the power that upholds him." So think about this. I hope some of you will have tasted this already with images. Something about the way they love us. Of course, you can taste it, you can feel it and taste it when you're related to with a certain love by another human being—again, when they're opening to and allowing the angelic, the imaginal dimension of your being. They're allowing themselves to witness that, to open to it, to sense it, to relate to it, to love it.

"The loved one feels the power that upholds him." I hope you've felt this. I hope you have tasted this with images, also with other human beings and practitioners. "He feels that the loving glance penetrates his

empirical being and points beyond it. Thus he is aware that for the one who loves him, he has become transparent. It exalts him above himself." This exalts him above himself.

"And he feels also that which shames him for not being in actuality as the other sees him. But instead of feeling that he is misunderstood, he has rather a sense that he is known to a preeminent degree."

So even when there's a sense of the image and the ideal of the image, and we feel we're not living up to it, and the image knows that, we still feel deeply understood, deeply known.

"And at the same time, he's forced to be what the other sees him to be."

So there's something again in the alchemy of images, of opening ourselves to the gaze of an image, to the sense and the conception of the imaginal in the way that we're talking about, that will galvanize all this. It changes our life. It directs us. It gives us power and also gives us courage and inclination to follow a certain direction, or calling, or action, or manifestation in our life.

Something very beautiful here. I want to talk about it in both domains: the domain of regarding an image or sensing the soul, something we're sensing the soul in the way that it loves us in this way that he's talking about; and or the human relationships, actual human relationships, when they're allowed to open, when we don't disallow that kind of opening to those imaginal dimensions.

Now, of course, some of you from the dharma background will get pretty nervous at this kind of language when he talks about one kind of ideal of a person. So we're using that—his language, as I said, the ideal of a personality is roughly akin to our language of the image of the self-image or the image that the other is seeing in us or we see in another, or the angel out ahead. We can just, for now, just lump them together.

[Continue beautifying the talk part 12/13]

This imaginal love is not only a disposition or an emotion or striving, but also a kind of knowing—a cognitive element always contained within love. Anyone who equates knowledge solely with thinking, reflective, rational consciousness of an object will naturally find contradiction here. But this represents an untenable idea of knowledge that neither science nor life would admit as adequate.

There exists a knowledge based on feeling—an intuitive knowledge. When we love this way, implicit within that love is that we know something profound about the person, or the image knows us deeply. As Hartman writes, "In a certain sense, the popular saying is right: love is blind, insofar as it does not see what is before its eyes. More correctly stated, it sees what is not in front of its eyes—what is not really at hand. It sees through."

This is the transparency—love's glances possess the nature of divination, seeing through to the ideal essence behind the actual person. To this love, the ideal essence behind the actual human is the person proper. Again, we're invited to play with this conception of ontology, to explore this range of the imaginal middle way. Who is the real being here? Is the image more real than the flesh and blood human

manifestation?

"As regards personality," Hartman continues, "he who loves is the only one who sees, while he who is without love is blind." He begins with the phrase "love is blind" but actually turns it around completely. If you don't love deeply in this way—if you don't include the imaginal dimension—you're actually not seeing properly. You're blinded by a certain level of what's obviously palpable, sensible, and agreed upon.

This gaze and this kind of love discovers the ideal in the empirical. It discovers the image in the human manifestation. And that love, within the limits of its power, creates it in the loved one. There's a kind of intuitive understanding that, through love and relationship, fertilizes and allows that seed to germinate, permitting it to actualize and come into being. This constructive work of love follows after its discernment, yet there remains a penetrating knowledge within this intuitive love.

Returning to epistemology—this way of knowing that Hartman describes represents a step further epistemologically than merely a way of looking. He's actually claiming this constitutes genuine knowledge, that there's truth to it. He very much belongs to that philosophical camp, and we want to open up that territory because there's such a tendency to dismiss these kinds of knowing in our culture.

The question then becomes: How far are we able to unite the life of the ideal with a sober view of the actual? It's not that we don't see the actual life—

It's not that the image doesn't see the actual in us, it's not that we don't see the actual in another person—their humanity, their faults, their foibles, their failings, their fallings. So how much can we unite the actual life with the ideal vision?

That combination, he says, need not be a compromise. The whole art of love consists in retaining this high point of vision as a perspective and remaining under its spell. Now he's talking about human relationships, but we might also translate this to the realm of imaginal relationships. We have to retain this openness to the image that loves us in that way. We have to let the image, as it naturally will, retain that high vision that it has of us, that perspective. And we are under the spell of that vision.

All that is implicit as part of the possibilities of what we can sense in the love that images have for us—the beauty of that, the way the soul is touched by that and opened like a flower opening, and guided and inspired and anchored.

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