Sīla and Soul (Part 8)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 1:54:32

So we've been saying that inevitably in our lives we're going to find ourselves in situations where the structure of the situation demands a choice, a moral choice on our part between two values, or of one value out of maybe more than two. At other times, it's not so much a specific situation as general directions in life where we need to choose, preferentially, one value that's perhaps in an antinomical and oppositional relationship with another value.

This doesn't arise only from the structure of the situation. It arises from the complexity of individual values and virtues implicating and involving others, needing counterweights, and values themselves being in antinomical relationships. Life asks us to do this. It presents us with these situations. Sometimes the choices are relatively simple, but when there's this antinomical relationship between values, it's not always so simple.

We can try to avoid this, but that's hardly a solution—not very ennobling, not very helpful for our soul or the growth of our moral being. And so we incur a certain guilt with the responsibility that comes as we make those choices in life, as we navigate our path through situations and in the general directions of our life.

One factor to consider here is why one person, given a choice between two values, chooses to prioritize and invest in and care for and express and manifest one value, while another person chooses a different value. There's a consideration of personal differences here that I think is really crucial—a difference in souls, in soul styles, in soul callings. This must come into a mature consideration of ethics.

There are moral duties that we have to the collective. I have a moral duty to the groups around me, the communities, the larger society. And I have, you have, each person has likewise a moral duty to one's own individual soul. There can be a tension here between them, and it's not always easy.

No one can flower fully as an individual. No one's soul can flower fully without drawing sustenance and all kinds of support from the basis of the collective, from what's around them. The individual rises up out of that to whatever extent they rise up. But likewise, the collective, the community, the society is dependent on the individuals. Actually, a really healthy community has individuated individuals. It's not a collection of replicas of unindividuated individuals.

To the extent that the individuals that make up a community or society are true to themselves, listening to their callings, their soul's promptings and callings, caring for their duty to themselves and allowing that to shape the flourishing of their being, the full flowering of their being, to that extent a community is strong,

is robust. So there's a kind of reciprocal dependency and reciprocal need between the collective and the individual. And in terms of the moral duties, there's a kind of tension there.

But how does the personal—what Hartman would call the personality or soul style, the individual duties of a soul, soul duties that are individual—how does that come in, flow in, and influence and affect this whole discussion of ethics, especially where there's choices to be made between values, as there always will be?

Some of what I want to explore a little bit here or open out may sound to some people perhaps a little provocative, maybe controversial, maybe contentious. I'm not sure—maybe not at all to some people, maybe so to others. I'm certainly not seeking to provoke or to be controversial for the sake of it. I get absolutely no kick out of that kind of thing.

But I do think it's important to try to open up this area, which is tricky, delicate, needs careful consideration. Can we begin, just begin right now, to open this up, open up the whole field for a kind of wider, deeper discussion? Some more careful considerations regarding ethics and soul, especially as some of the things I want to go into now are areas that are not usually considered when we consider ethics.

But they are pertinent, and particularly they're pertinent if we're interested in soul-making. Axiomatic to soul-making is the principle of the necessity of my uniqueness and my particularities and my individual soul—not at the exclusion of everything else, but that's a part of it. So these areas that I want to talk about are pertinent when we talk about sīla and soul, ethics and soul. I hope I'll do my best not to be clumsy. I'm sure inevitably I'll be a little clumsy in how I phrase things and treading in this delicate territory, but I'll do my best.

There is this whole range of values, whole range of possible choices that we have, either in terms of the larger currents of our life or in specific situations. We need to make choices. To not make a choice is also a choice, but not ennobling, not soul-making. We need to make choices. And part of what comes into making our choices, part of what forms and shapes and directs and inspires different choices by different individuals, is those personal soul styles, personal inclinations or callings or duties of the soul.

Hartman points out—and this really is important to say—that the universal values, in other words, not the personal values, but those basic precepts that we get in Buddha Dharma, or the basic sort of last five of the Ten Commandments, and that kind of thing, the universal values such as justice—they need to form the basis, and in a way they have unconditional precedence. They are chiseled in stone. They form a platform, a foundation, on top of which, on the basis of which, the more differentiated personal values can be built and raised.

Everyone has an obligation to these basic universal values and to the precepts organized around them. But on top of that foundation, all kinds of choices present themselves in terms of the variegated emphases on different values that one can have, the differences that can exist between human beings. But that

foundation remains essential.

Now, in a way, this sounds like a relatively simple formula in the abstract. And sometimes it is very simple. You choose this, I choose that. You prefer this, I prefer that. I prefer developing this, I prefer investing in that. As long as we're both maintaining the universal values, keeping a care for them, then all's well and good. So sometimes it's that simple, but sometimes it's not. It's a little more tricky, a little more nebulous and ambiguous.

We draw into our evaluation of others and self sometimes what's just indoctrination or fashion or the dominant view of the culture. It's not necessarily such an open-eyed, unblinkered view of the moral landscape.

Some souls, as I see different people, read about different people, know different people, may have a kind of soul calling to express or manifest what might be quite extraordinary virtues—not so commonly found virtues. A kind of boldness that's out of the ordinary, a moral courage that's out of the ordinary, for instance, to speak the truth, to stand up in truth despite threats and possible dangers. In their soul style, they might express and manifest what Hartman called this radiant virtue—the German *strahlende Tugend*. I asked Kirsten and she said that's not a good translation, but I didn't ask her what a better one would be. She said it would be difficult to find words.

But this radiant virtue—there's something in the being, it's like sunshine, spiritual sunshine just pouring out of them, radiating to those nearby. Sometimes it communicates non-verbally and indirectly, sometimes through direct interactions. That's not a common virtue. It's an uncommon virtue.

Or a person may have a capacity for a kind of radical generosity—how they are with money, how they are with their possessions. A kind of magnanimity, a largeness of soul, a big spirit, a big heart. An adventurousness of spirit that's quite rare. Some people may have those kinds of more extraordinary virtues, and that's their soul style, that's their soul shape, that's what they're called to manifest in this life. It's part of their ethos, their soul, their personality.

And sometimes what I notice is that this manifestation, this soul style, may come in a package where other virtues are relatively neglected. We've touched on this before, or even contravened, or at least not developed so much. For example, they may not be gentle of speech. They may be at times quite harsh, even insensitive, judgmental. Or they just seem to live in a way that keeps quite different sexual mores. They may be quite promiscuous, and other people might be looking and judging that promiscuity. Maybe that goes with the kind of liberality and freedom of soul.

Oftentimes, those particular neglects of whichever virtues are relatively speaking neglected may be judged by others in the society, in the wider society. But those others may be relatively or even completely insensitive or blind to the particular set of virtues that this person is expressing. They're blind to the radiant virtue. They're blind to the radical generosity. They're blind to the moral courage. Or they don't

value it so much. They evaluate it differently.

And the others who are judging this person—I'm thinking of several people now—might also be blind or insensitive to the very idea of duty to one's soul, to one's *daimon*, to one's angel, to what Hartman calls the ideal personality.

So this is tricky. The universal values must be a foundation, must be a common universal foundation. But on top of this, there's this space, this amplitude for personal variation and disposition and inclination and the callings of the soul. It sounds simple, but it can be very tricky here. Because what exactly are those universal foundations? Where are the boundaries?

Consider Bob Marley, whose being exuded magnanimity, largeness of spirit, radical generosity, and openness. He radiated spiritual sunshine and beneficence, embodying boldness, adventurousness, and courage while bestowing his creative gifts artistically to humanity. Yet some criticized his sexual promiscuity and infidelity to his various partners.

This raises profound questions: In the particular personal, relational, marital, community and wider social context of Jamaica at that time, where exactly lay the boundary of universal values regarding sexual behavior or monogamy? This complexity illustrates how tricky these considerations become.

We encounter multiple tensions here: the need for faithfulness to individual soul callings and the virtues that grasp us, alongside duties to both collective well-being and universal values. Yet these universal values don't always have clearly demarcated edges. Moreover, people with certain kinds of spirit often face judgment from those blind to particular virtues or to the duty each soul has toward its own unique callings.

I tread carefully here, offering this as something to consider rather than providing definitive answers. These tensions arise from different pulls and demands—duties drawing us in various directions.

Hartman speaks of developing personality toward what he calls the ideal personality. Each person possesses this ideal existing in the realm of ideals. Though we never completely manifest or express it fully, it constitutes, in some ways, our more real essence than what we actually demonstrate. This ideal resembles what we've discussed as the angel out ahead or the daemon refracted.

In Hartman's language, developing our personality toward this ideal—listening faithfully to its callings, shapings, and promptings—constitutes virtue itself. Can we include this in our sense of values: the value of our individual personality, of listening to and caring for those unique soul callings and our soul's growth?

This developmental process includes each individual's unique weighing and differential emphasis between different values. How I weigh competing, oppositional values in situations differs from how you or another person might weigh them. This differential weighing becomes part of shaping our being, part

of soul-making.

While goodness involves choosing the higher value, this principle alone doesn't provide sufficient clarity about what to do, nor does it offer a complete picture of what's involved in the choices presented to us as souls. Yes, we choose higher, but combined with this principle, we have the possibility to choose in different ways as part of developing our souls.

This faithfulness to our own soul's particularities and individualities—because our ideal personality itself constitutes virtue—creates an ought and duty to this unique, irreplaceable, once-in-a-cosmos soul. This unique, irreplaceable personality represents a moral demand, a moral value, perhaps a very high one. However, its value plummets if we contravene universal values in pursuing it.

This duty to the unique and irreplaceable once-in-a-cosmos soul that you are proves difficult to find in teachings—certainly in Buddha Dharma or in various emptiness teachings or oneness teachings. Generally, they lack this recognition. It's quite unusual even in moral philosophy to acknowledge this duty to what Hartman calls ideal personality, to our individual soul. Though I'm no expert in the range of moral philosophy, aside perhaps from Max Scheler, I'm uncertain where else such considerations appear among moral philosophers, who tend toward different approaches.

So within the realm of this consideration of what constitutes an individual calling and our duty to that calling, I want to explore three particular and somewhat unusual manifestations. Again, for the sake of opening out what is less commonly examined, and for the sake of understanding what has quite a lot to do with soul in particular ways.

The first is the virtue of nobility, as Hartman uses that word. I tend to use it in a slightly different way, but that's not important here. I want to talk about what he calls the noble—a possible kind of virtue or value, or rather orientation to value, that is rarer but may have its place when we consider the callings of individual souls.

For him, the noble is the opposite of the common. This has nothing to do with social class or money, nothing to do with aristocracy in the usual sense, nothing to do with ethnic or racial divisions. It is simply the opposite of the common, what he calls noble. Because in a way, he writes, goodness can sometimes be commonplace. There is such a thing as hackneyed virtue, ignoble contentment, narrow-minded virtue and righteousness.

Now, he's not saying that all goodness is like that—that would be neither accurate nor kind. And even when there is hackneyed virtue, it doesn't make it bad; it's just common, just what everyone does or most people do.

This nobility he speaks of is actually not everyone's concern. Goodness—what it means to be good, to practice being good, to invest in goodness, to care for goodness—that's everyone's concern. Nobility is something particular to some souls. It is uncommon. It is always uncommon to few, he says. Its opposite is

the common, the usual, ordinary, the well-worn track upon which both goodness and badness can be found.

By its very nature, the noble is not everybody's concern. So even among the good—those who are good or who care for goodness—there are the noble and the not so noble. He says it consists in nothing but an aristocracy of disposition.

What is he talking about? In any culture, there is a generally accepted morality—in most cultures at least, certainly throughout history, perhaps less so nowadays. We've discussed this historical fact of shifting moralities between cultures, different times and places in history, different communities. But this search for what is not yet in the range of accepted morality—this is a noble search.

Some people are sensitive to groping for, intuiting at the edge of, grasping and being grasped by a value or set of values that are out of the ordinary for their context, for their social context and its accepted morality. There's the prevailing view and whatever that morality encompasses. It can be extended upwards into higher reaches of the development of certain values—one way of grasping what's out of the common range. But it can also move laterally, not just upwards toward higher values or more extreme reaches of a certain value, but into different values that are not even on the radar of an accepted morality.

He says it is to this also—as well as to the height of moral values and extending the highest—to this wider range, this moving into new territory, this sensing or opening up of a novel ethical sensibility, that the searching glance of nobility is directed. Progress in selecting values, even within the range of goodness, is itself a function of the noble. For nobility of character is the pursuit of the uncommon.

What he's describing are pioneers in any given time and place, whose antennae, whose soul receptors are sensitive to what is uncommon, what is beyond the scope of usual sensibility. In opening up that sensibility, they break new ground. But in time, that new ground comes to be shared with the larger part of society. Those perspectives, sensibilities, and priorities come to be shared more widely. What was cutting-edge new territory becomes relatively common. Then the process must start again, historically. Now this range is common, and some people will be sensitive to newer values, to the uncommon.

The content of nobility changes, although its direction toward the uncommon remains the same, he writes. And he continues: in the historic process of the displacement of values from area to area within the whole range of the scope of the firmament of values...

In the historic process of the displacement of values, the essence of nobility is the perpetual anticipation, the searching and testing, the moving forward which transforms the ethos of an epoch. Its content at any given moment must therefore be the moral claim of the uncommon. Without the noble, the process must need stagnate, and since to stand still is an impossibility, become retrogressive. On the grand scale, nobility is the onward-striving life of the historical ethos. In the individual is the spirit of the pioneer.

Again, I don't know where this lands in you. Some of this sounds so elitist, and it's a certain view of

history, but to me, there's something worth considering here. I just want to open out some territory for our consideration. It doesn't mean we have to buy these ideas wholesale, but there is something here, rarely considered in moral philosophy, that has importance for our considerations of soul-making.

He says that as regards its content, the higher development of the human type always depends on the actual tendency—not perhaps the conscious aims—of the noble. It necessarily clashes with the interest of those who are accounted "good," and is always to some extent aloof from the community at large and stands in open opposition to the universality of their standards. So again, we get this sense of people who would judge this prioritizing of virtues to which they are blind. There's a kind of clash between the normally respected members of society and those with this noble character—a clash of interests and moral values and vision and sensibilities. And so there's a kind of separation.

An improvement in the standard is made possible by concentration of energy upon a narrower sphere. Again, there's this principle we touched on before: how progress is often made, new territory is stretched into, by focusing and getting interested in something particular and really heightening our focus, our work in that direction. Hence the necessary remoteness of the selecting group from the general public.

He writes quite strongly: "The noble man hates all compromise as to values, even those that are wise and beneficent." Can you get the sense of the kind of soul character he's describing? A pioneer who is at odds with the entrenched, ordinary, common, respectable way of being. They are reaching out, listening to some kind of sense of something else that is possible—some extension that's possible. And there is in that character a kind of dislike of compromise. They tend to be very uncompromising.

"His salvation lies in another direction, in the exclusive fostering of the value which he thinks should be preferred, even at the expense of all others." This kind of character can often seem to others a bit out of balance. They're pressing on into the future, into unexplored territory. As such, they can be leaning forward into that in a way that others would regard as being out of balance. Perhaps it's part of the soul style.

Is it always a demand for the soul to be balanced? You get a lot of that in some interpretations of Jungian psychology—it's all about wholeness and balance. And yet there is a place for a lack of balance. Perhaps there's a place for this, perhaps there's a soul style that goes with that. And yes, it comes with costs.

This is an unusual consideration, an unusual way of thinking, perhaps controversial, but it might be relevant to certain souls. It might be relevant to the duty that certain souls have—the particular duties in the realm of values. They always go together, duty and value.

The expanding into new territory of valuational sensibility and the ethical side... we've talked about values being an intrinsic part of soul-making as one of the elements of the imaginal, and everything we're discussing about ethics and how they relate to values and how our relationship with values and virtues can be made soul-making. Some people have suggested something like this to me: that soul-making itself is

a kind of value. We're valuing, we value soul-making. As such, that might be what Hartman would call a noble virtue, or one of the new virtues for our time—a relatively new value.

We value something because it's soulful. We value soul-making. We value that whole ethos and sensibility and sensitivity to existence, to self, other, world, to the elements of our psychology, to the cosmos. And that in our time, that might be an expansion into newer territory in terms of a new virtue, a new value. Soul-making itself.

The second area I'd like to consider—again, quite tricky territory, but we'll see how we do—is hatred. Hatred. I want to see if it's possible to shine a little light again from the point of view of soul and what it might have to do with soul—hatred and soul.

We value soul-making, that whole ethos and sensibility toward existence—toward self, other, world, toward the elements of our psychology, toward the cosmos. In our time, this might represent an expansion into newer territory, a new virtue, a new value that soul-making offers.

The second area I'd like to consider—though it's quite tricky territory—is hatred. I want to see if it's possible to shine a little light from the perspective of soul and what it might have to do with soul: hatred and soul.

So what do we mean by hatred? If you look it up in the dictionary, it simply says something like "intense dislike," which is good enough for our purposes. Different schools approach the psychology of hatred in various ways, defining it in more specific terms. But let's say this: intense dislike, and so to speak, making almost an enemy out of something.

It could manifest in a cold way—some people include in their definition of hatred that it has a coldness different from anger, which is hot. But I include both. So it can be cold, withdrawn and out of relationship, or it can be hot, ranting, whatever.

We should also say that hatred does not necessarily include ill will. Ill will means to wish harm on someone. So you can intensely dislike something, you can hate something without wishing a person or persons harm. It's not the same either as cruelty, which is inflicting harm and enjoying it—either inflicting harm or enjoying a harm that someone else is suffering. Those are, if you like, a whole step further from what I'm talking about here by hatred.

So we have intense dislike that doesn't necessarily include ill will or cruelty. Let's see if we put this in a soul-making context, bringing together these elements and shining light from the perspective of soul-making teachings. Perhaps there's something worthwhile to consider here that can help open things up.

I've said several times that perhaps a really fundamental axiom of soul-making dharma is: soul loves soul-making, soul wants soul-making. It sounds so simple—soul wants soul-making. And in a way, it might

be possible to use that axiom very basically, taking it as a first principle and seeing what follows from it.

So rather than saying human beings want attachment, or human beings want pleasure, or human beings want biological survival—whatever the primary drives might be—what if we say, actually, soul wants soul-making? Just entertain the idea that this is the primary drive. Our primary drive as human beings is toward soul-making, and this gets diverted, subverted in different ways. What might ensue? What might this imply when we consider our psychology and our needs as human beings, how we consider developmental psychology and all kinds of things?

Soul wants soul-making, which implies eros, because eros is an indispensable element of soul-making. And soul-making also involves, with the eros, that the self, other, world, and even our eros itself become imaginal. Soul-making also asks that the sense of self, other, world in our life mirror those imaginal things. So there has to be some refracting, some mirroring, some reflecting. And with the eros, there's always this beyond—always something to reach into, to grope into, to feel into, to sense into, to create, to discover into. There's always the angel out ahead.

Now, soul wants soul-making, but because of avijjā, because of the basic delusional reification of self, other, world, and elements of our psyche and psychology and being—for instance, eros—because of this delusional reification, because of cultural indoctrination, because of limited patterns or limitations on the movement and growth, the expansion of eros, of psyche, of logos, and also of emotional, heart, life, and energy in general, the soul often moves in a direction that is not soul-making.

Many people would contest this idea that the basic drive is toward soul-making, saying something like: before all this soul-making stuff, before eros for soul-making which is like icing on the cake, souls, beings, egos want to live. They want biological survival. They want to feel well. They want pleasurable sensations—the pleasure principle and all that.

But we're not clinging to this as dogmatic ultimate truth, this idea that what souls want most fundamentally is soul-making. It's illuminating, I think, and opens up different perspectives and avenues in our life. And you can look throughout history, even today in the West, at countless numbers of human beings who choose soul-making over and before pleasure, over and before even health, and sometimes even physical survival. Sometimes making choices in the service of something that's soul-making, despite the material cost, the hedonic cost—meaning it's painful, it's unpleasant—and despite physical cost.

There are countless examples that bear witness to this prioritizing of soul-making over any of these other drives that are usually considered more primary. Something can trump all those. A person can say, "It doesn't matter if I die. I sacrifice my health. I sacrifice my material well-being, my pleasure."

Let's play with this principle: soul wants soul-making as the fundamental drive, with everything that's involved in soul-making. Now, sometimes what happens is that soul-making is blocked. It's not possible, or it's blocked by some inner or outer obstacles. It's not possible for the sense of self, other, world and eros to

become imaginal.

Either one has only literalized the desire, so there's desire present, but it's craving rather than eros, and nothing is imaginable for whatever reason—or in the blocking, one literalizes desire. This can go both ways. The literalized desire blocks the soul-making, or when soul-making is blocked in some other way, then the desire is still there and can only get literalized because it cannot get transformed and dimensionalized by the soul-making process.

Then a few different things can happen. One is we can try to have whatever it is—the object that we want. Hatred often arises when there's something we want but cannot have. Without eros being allowed to instigate the soul-making dynamic and allow things to become imaginal, to have dimensions and depths, this desire is merely craving, not eros. It has to move on a one-dimensional plane, flatly in the flat world, into a kind of greed for more and more things, or into consumerism.

Another possibility when soul-making is blocked and desire remains is a kind of collapse, a despair. The being collapses—you can see it in a person's body language and demeanor at a certain time, or as a more general trend throughout their whole life, because there's been a kind of habitual collapse of the whole soul, or a large portion of the soul. This happens because the eros, the libido, are not allowed to grow and extend things. Sometimes with that despair and collapse, there's a withdrawal—what some psychologists call a schizoid withdrawal. One retreats from relationship with the other or others.

What happens then to the eros or desire? A third possibility is that hatred ensues.

When we're frustrated in our desires, in the desires of our soul, we either reify something and move toward greed or craving on a flat level, collapse in despair inwardly in this withdrawal from relationship, or something gets transformed into hatred—or some combination of those three.

The hatred is particularly interesting because it often comes from a feeling or perception of powerlessness—the powerlessness of self in its desire with regard to something for the self, or its desire for something with regard to another, or its desire in the world, and not being able to have that. When this is intense, there's a feeling of powerlessness.

I want to focus on certain kinds of hatred—very particular manifestations of hatred. You can see this link with powerlessness, if you weren't already aware of it. Powerlessness and hatred often go together. If you find yourself in a really difficult contraction of hatred, one of the first things to do when working with it is to look for and ask: In what ways do I feel powerless? What is the particular kind of powerlessness I feel?

For example, sometimes someone who's a secularist—and I use that word in the sense of opposition to religious fundamentalism—may hate religious fundamentalists when they feel powerless in relation to them, either because they feel powerless regarding a group of terrorists or because they're living in a community or country with oppressive religious law. They might hate that because there's powerlessness in it.

Conversely, many religious fundamentalists hate secularists when they feel powerless in relationship to them. They may feel powerless with respect to the sweeping power of capitalist and modernist views, what they would regard as modernist immorality and amorality.

Hatred and powerlessness usually go together. The hatred often comes out of or from a feeling of powerlessness. This is quite important to be aware of and to explore.

But I want to talk about quite specific kinds of hatred—more narrow ones that don't just involve powerlessness, but powerlessness in relation to what may be soul-making. Where the soul wants soul-making and somehow it's blocked. And maybe it doesn't even realize that what it wants is soul-making. That's partly why I'm saying all this.

Actually, on the theme of power, there's a lot of energy, a lot of libido, a lot of life force tied up in hatred. It can feel completely frozen, completely contracted and imprisoned and not very powerful, but actually, because there's so much energy tied up in it, there's potentially a lot of power in it. So there's a possibility of liberating that power and energy.

Again, it depends on what we do with that power. It comes from a feeling of powerlessness, but it actually has in it the potential of tremendous power. That power can go in the soul-making direction—can kick-start, galvanize, instigate, open up, and give energy to the direction of soul-making, to things becoming images, to the imaginal sense of self, other, world, and eros.

Or it can get stuck in that withdrawal and despair. Actually, that tightness there, that contraction, has a lot of power. It takes quite a lot to keep the soul bound up like that, to keep the being contracted and withdrawn like that.

Or this potential power can move in the direction of literalized action—perhaps action to destroy the object of hatred, or to work towards what is actually desired.

There's potentially a lot of power in hatred. It feels, once we get under the sort of obvious feelings of hatred, then there's a sense of powerlessness, and underneath that is the potential of liberating power. And the question is: what will we do with that power? Where will it go?

So hatred comes out of, usually, a feeling or a perception of powerlessness of the self in relation to its desire for something regarding self or the world.

Now, an interesting thing about hatred—and this is the particular kind of hatred I want to talk about—is that oftentimes certain kinds of hatred arise for what is quite close or similar. So it's very common, for example, for people within a certain religious tradition to end up hating, intensely disliking, or opposing someone in the same tradition whose teachings are in some ways very similar—making a kind of enemy or polemic out of them. This happens in the realm of philosophy, in psychological schools, or whatever. This is quite interesting.

Why is it that certain kinds of hatred arise much more towards some expression or manifestation that's actually not too far from one's own position? If we think, for example, it's unlikely that someone in the Insight Meditation tradition would start hating the proponents of indigenous belief from Papua New Guinea or something like that—it's too dissimilar. But within that range of what is quite similar, let's say the Insight Meditation tradition or Tibetan Buddha Dharma, it can be intense and polemic.

The Insight Meditation tradition tends not to speak these things, but they simmer along there in the background, and you can hear them come out. You've probably heard it seep out of this voice at times. The Tibetans are much more open about it and engage in what I think is probably a much healthier open polemic that's quite cutting and intense at times.

So why the similarity? Is it something to do with the relationship between eros and hatred? Are there certain souls who might have a lot of soulfulness, a lot of disposition towards soul-making, towards image, towards eros, that may be in some ways liable to or prone to this kind of hatred for something that's actually quite similar?

What's the connection here possibly? Eros delineates. We talked about this when we went into detail in previous retreats. What does eros do? It complexifies, it creates distinctions, it creates and discovers more and more faces in what it loves and carves its relationship with those particulars. Making those distinctions, discovering and creating those delineations, those different faces—this is part of the whole process. Certainly one can get attached to those.

But there's something probably more primary even than the attachment: the fear of the dissolving of the objects of eros that have been created, discovered through this process of fine delineation, of subtle discernment, discrimination, subtle kind of differentiation into different aspects. When another teaching or tradition or school of thought is quite close, it perhaps presents more of a danger to one's own objects of eros—what one has delineated and what one loves in terms of what's opening up for oneself.

Where there's less similarity, where the difference is huge, it's strangely less likely that hatred arises. Somehow the object of my eros, that which I love, that which I'm discovering and creating here in terms of thought and the direction of my eros and the whole sense of soul—carving that out in terms of self, other, world—if that's blocked somewhere or crowded out by something that's similar, but in the similarity tends to be heard or seen in a way that washes over all differences, then the hatred might arise. It's more likely to arise.

This is interesting. Is there a relationship between eros and hatred? Hatred in Pali, in Sanskrit, the word is dvesha. The root there is from dva, which means "two," "to make two." And of course, creating duality is part of eros as well. This is why eros can be dangerous, a double-edged sword, if you like. Is there some connection here—the need to differentiate, and the actual differentiation that comes with eros, and the tendency or the danger of hatred there?

Thinking also of James Hillman at this point, who said somewhere, "You have to hate something." If you read some of his books, and more and more in interviews, but it comes across in writings as well, he's quite polemic. What he would have openly called a hatred of different schools of psychology. Notice that his hatred was for psychologists—he was a psychologist hating different or varying schools of psychology.

For instance, there was a teacher of his at the Jung Institute called Marie-Louise von Franz, and she presented a certain picture of puerpyschology and other things which affronted Hillman's own soul sensibility and the kind of careful differentiations that his soul-making process made, that his eros and the eros of his intellect and sensibility made. So he, in a way, hated her teachings. He also hated what he regarded as the dominant psychology at the time when he was beginning to write—the dominant ego psychology or behavioral psychology.

So, in a way, the preponderance of these dominant paradigms, and the power wielded by Marie-Louise von Franz as an authority in the Jungian school alongside the established psychological frameworks, perhaps made him feel a relative lack of power. The danger, as I said, was that what he wanted to find out for himself, discover, create space for, and present—both to his soul and to the soul of the world and to others—these faces were in danger of getting covered over. In that situation, there was a feeling of relative powerlessness.

But what was interesting in that case, and part of what I want to convey, is that he was able to mobilize a power for himself in actuality by writing and speaking, and also by working with and supporting others whose work he sympathized with. In doing all this—beginning to write and speak and carve out this vision, this soul vision and soul sensibility, and present it as something different and differentiable to the world—he in a way became image for himself. His eros, all of it, was allowed to come into the soul-making process. Even the other can become a kind of imaginal other, in terms of the other as object of hatred, whether it's a school or a person embodying that school.

This is not actually, as I said, ill will or harm. But it can become imaginal and not reified. So faced with that potential obliteration and covering over, the loss of what his soul-making process was revealing and creating—the differentiations, the aspects of divinity, the aspects of soul—faced with the danger of that and the relative powerlessness or perception of powerlessness in that wider situation, he was able to act and move in a way that the whole landscape of that environment and all the constituents of that landscape in the world of psychology became actually imaginal for him. He himself became an imaginal character in that landscape.

Remember, the erotic imaginal always has these beyonds to it. So you get something similar with the warrior always fighting as image. There's not an end to this. It's not necessarily an end to some of these battles. Some revolutionaries actually need a constant revolution. The soul would not be satisfied with arriving at some kind of finished utopia. There's this beyond there.

Faced with this kind of situation—the desire, the frustrated desire, the incipient movement of eros, and

the sensed powerlessness and danger with respect to what it wants—it could be anything that the soul wants. But getting what one wants, or what one thinks one wants, in some of these situations, may not actually be soul-making. That's a point to bear in mind.

One way out of all this, one way to dissolve the hatred, is to really let go in terms of what's taught in some of the classical Buddha Dharma teachings. Another is when the self actually manages to get some power and no longer feels so powerless—when there's a decrease of the sense of powerlessness, and the sense of the self that's desired, whatever the other is that's desired, and the sense of the world that one's in that's desired are achieved materially or literally. That would be another way out of that hatred. But another is for something to become image—for self, other, world, eros to become image, or some combination of all these avenues.

It's worth bearing in mind that sometimes, as I said, getting what one wants—the literal achievement of what one desires—may or may not be soul-making. If the self, other, world, and eros don't open up to the imaginal, with this open-endedness and beyondness, the forever beyondness there, then that process may not be soul-making.

We've talked about this before on previous retreats: the need for boundaries, because boundaries make two. There's a boundary between this and that, between number one and number two. So boundaries, limits, actually form part of the crucible of soul-making. Sometimes, as I said, getting what one wants, if one's not careful, is not actually soul-making. If I get what I want, there has to be something more that I haven't got that I want. There's the extension into the beyonds of the eros, the angel out ahead, always moving ahead, the infinite growth of those beyonds. So there's still a boundary between what I have and what I don't have that can potentially allow more—allow a soul-making process.

I can end the hatred by getting what I want, but it might not be soul-making. What's the fundamental desire there? Is it to get what I want, or is it actually the soul-making? If I've sold it short by just getting what I want, I've flattened it.

So hatred will stay as poisonous hatred—and it really can be very poisonous and very imprisoning, toxic in the way it seeps out to other people as well—when self, other, world, and eros cannot become image. It can be transformed, it can dissolve when we let go, when we really fully let go in the usual dharmic sense, or when we get some power in terms of what we want, or when things become image and are really allowed to become imaginal.

I was struck—I don't know if you saw it—there was a video someone sent me sometime in the last three years.

And it was, I think, someone had posted on Facebook or something. It was a kind of selfie video that this young woman had taken. I think she was Swedish, but I can't remember. And she had boarded a plane—a regular airline flight to Afghanistan or somewhere—which contained an Afghani man that was being

deported, probably facing great threat to his life back in Afghanistan.

She boarded this plane and took a selfie of herself standing up and refusing to sit down when they asked everyone to sit down so they could take off. She filmed it on her camera. She disrupted the flight and she and the Afghani man were removed. But I was so touched by seeing this video. I don't know if you saw it—I think it was quite popular.

She was in a situation where there was potentially a great deal of powerlessness, a sense of powerlessness. Yet she actually did something quite brave and extraordinary. I thought it very beautiful in the kind of grace with which she did it and the largeness of soul with which she did it. But it was self-empowering in the sense that instead of just feeling powerless in terms of that terrible situation, she did something which was self-empowering.

By empowering herself that way, I don't know if she would have gotten contracted into hate, but there was certainly much less chance. There was the dissolving of any chance of hatred through the self-empowering. And hatred often goes with this kind of hardness of heart, something really brittle and contracted there.

Part of what was really touching to me seeing this was just how vulnerable she could be at the same time. She was very strong, standing up, being very firm with those who were shouting at her and criticizing her and calling her names. She was very strong, very upright, very bold, very courageous, very clear, and at the same time very vulnerable. So she was crying and there was a richness of soul there. There was a breadth of soul. There wasn't any hardness there at all.

And it was interesting too—again, we're talking about ethics in terms of some of what people who didn't like what she was doing, some of the other passengers on the flight complained about the inconvenience. "What about, you know, there are children on the plane," they said. "You're upsetting the children." And again, you can hear there the sort of opposition of different value systems—I would say actually values of different heights in this hierarchy of values.

You know, inconvenience: how high a value, how important a value is convenience? And there's so often this trope of "upsetting the children" as if that's something that's kind of become something almost sacred in some people's outlook in our culture, so that those values like that become somehow more important or eclipse the value of care, of kindness, of compassion, of saving someone's life, of standing up to injustice.

And again, so we have to be very careful with hatred. I'm just talking there about certain manifestations of hatred that come out of—actually, at their root, there's a blocked soul-making. There's some soul-making and some direction of eros and image and soulfulness that wants to be allowed to flourish, wants to be given space to carve out a pathway for a soul, and it's blocked, and hatred can come out of that.

Sometimes we're just so in the hatred, we don't actually quite realize the different levels of what's going on, even the level of the powerlessness, etc. In some of those instances it's worth—it's not easy, but it's

worth perhaps approaching it with this lens, to do with power and powerlessness and soul-making and what the soul might want there that's getting blocked and are there ways for it to open up the situation imaginally, etc.

So again, tricky territory, difficult, potentially contentious, but really important to consider if we want to bring in the reflections about soul and considerations of soul into our considerations and reflections on ethics and morality and also psychology more generally.

Okay, the third—again, example of a kind of unusual area that's unusual to consider, an area of ethical values that's unusual to consider, but that also might have something to do with what's a personal calling for some souls—is one I've mentioned before in one of the earlier talks in the talks on ethics. It's this love of the remote.

So I want to say something about that. I think it was coined by Nietzsche as an idea, but I'm not entirely sure. So what is this love of the remote? I've actually mentioned it earlier, but I want to go into it again.

There is for us a kind of bond with those that are nearest to us in the community. We have an obligation to them, etc. We feel that bond. We rub shoulders with them. We feel moral duty and concern in relation to them. Love of the remote has—one of its aspects is a love for, an obligation for, a moral duty, or it's a sense of love, a sense of obligation, a sense of moral duty to the future, if you like, to the following generation or following generations. That's one aspect of it.

I'll qualify a bit more in a moment.

So Hartman writes about this, and he says, "The responsibility which arises therefrom"—the responsibility which arises from this, the responsibility of this responsibility to the future, this particular kind of responsibility to the future—"signifies a solidarity of a newer and greater kind than that of justice, brotherly love, and faith. Like these, it is a bond, a fellowship, a pledge, a joint responsibility of person for person." But it's different, he says.

"In it, the man of today feels himself one with the man of the faraway future, though the latter will have forgotten him and cannot be of help to him. The temporal direction of cause and effect is not reversible. The influence of man on man, solidarity itself, is only one-sided. Only he who lived previously can be of service to him who lives afterwards. The successor bears no retrospective obligation. Instead, there falls to him a new obligation towards the generations coming after him. Solidarity is directed forward only. Its form is progress, not coexistence. Still, it is a bond which is great not only in extent, but great in the quality of its task."

So there's perhaps some overlap here with what he calls nobility. And again, we're talking about something that not everyone will resonate with. Not everyone will feel a soul calling and a duty in this direction.

He continues, "That it is a bond of a more fragile kind, that it is taken so much less earnestly by the living than is the solidarity of justice or love. This is not due to its own nature. It is due to the moral immaturity of the living, to their not having wakened to their greatest task. It is their lack of thorough self-conquest which transcends the sphere of the now and the near."

So again, it's quite strong language. But he's saying sometimes we get so preoccupied or so limited in our sense of the scope of our obligations that we forget that we might have a greater obligation to the sort of progress of humanity, if you like.

In German it's called *Fernsterliebe*, and it was, in fact, Nietzsche who coined the term. It's very characteristic of Nietzsche and something that he was perhaps the first person to promote—the first person to cotton on to and sense really keenly. He had an imbalanced relationship with it because he neglected its antinomical value in the love of the nearest. So Hartmann criticizes him for that, which I think is a good point.

But then I'm going to read another passage. He says, "Love of the remotest at first really requires an overcoming of one's commitment to the nearest." So this is interesting, and we're talking about values that have antinomical relationships.

"It is the same overcoming which generally inheres in the nature of a future intention. Everything which is dear and entrusted to man attaches to the immediate environment, usually. Here, an attachment of love to the remote is demanded." Somehow I have to feel this attachment, this moral obligation to the remote, the far future.

"Hence not only natural inclination but also genuine moral habit must be overcome," he says. "A valuable commitment, not acquired without moral struggle, is to retire into the background and give way to another ethos."

So we may have worked hard to practice love of the nearest, to practice altruism. And in a way, at a certain stage, maybe something else has to come in. And that love of the nearest has to kind of, relatively speaking, diminish in our hierarchy of priorities for some.

"So it's the conquering of a product of previous self-conquest. Love of the nearest, or altruism, went counter to self-love, to egoism. It was a tremendous extension of the sphere of life, efficiency, evaluation, participation. Now even this widened sphere is seen to be too narrow, to be a drag on the intention of love. Love of the nearest does not go beyond one's contemporary. Its effect does not endure. It dies with its object. It is not adapted to the continuation of its object, but to his present existence. Love of the remotest seeks a different measure of efficiency, an efficacy which will last."

Now, I should qualify what he means here, because he doesn't mean that some of you have heard of the need to consider the next seven generations in our choices now. That to me is absolutely critical when we're talking about things like species loss and climate change. We really need to bring that kind of

thinking, this care for the future, this care for the next seven generations, seventy generations. In terms of the totality, everyone in those generations we need to care for. That's, to me, a given and just common ethical sense—well, it should be common ethical sense.

But he's actually talking about something different here. It's not obvious from the language of "love the remote," but he writes, "In love of the nearest, the energy of striving, as it has no choice, reconciles itself with whoever is accidentally at hand." It's just the practicing of kindness and concern and empathy and support to whoever's around one. It has nothing to do with whether that person is worthy or not, just as when we teach metta.

It's unconditional in that regard. So it's not interested in assessing whether someone is worthy or unworthy of that kindness, that love of the nearest.

With love of the remotest, though, it's different. And this is where it might sound somewhat contentious to some people. The energy of striving, he writes, "shall serve not the nearest, but the best, whom it will bring to further fruition. Herein, a selection of persons from the point of view of values is introduced, a selection which on its side does not refer to the given person at all, but to the type of man."

So there's this interest—in this kind of love that Nietzsche was promulgating and that Hartmann's picking up on, and I think Max Scheler as well—there's this interest in those in the far future, but specifically those who are the most morally ready people, the most morally capable, what he calls "the best" in the future. So it's quite elitist and quite selective. And it does consider worth. It does evaluate in terms of values and virtues and moral capacity and sensibility.

This is probably not at all fashionable in many circles nowadays, given our current way of thinking in society. It's worth noting that in the Pali Canon, it mentions several times that the Buddha, when he was going to give a Dharma talk, would use his psychic powers, his *siddhis*, to survey the audience and find who was nearest to awakening. Not those who were already Arahants, not those who were at the beginning, but he would get a sense of where everyone was at with his psychic powers. And he would aim his talk, pitch his talk at those who were nearest to awakening. Not at the beginners, not at those far away, but those who were nearest to awakening. Again, he's aiming at the best. He's aiming at a certain capacity.

How rare that is for us to think that way these days. For many of us, it contravenes another kind of ethical law—this love of the nearest, which often goes with a concern for who's weakest, who's more the beginner, who's more in need. So there is this antinomy between these two valuational pools and duties. Hartmann criticized Nietzsche for being too one-sided and neglecting the love of the nearest. But there's this antinomy, this tension there.

Because it puts one out of relationship a little bit, or less in relationship with those around one, and the demands and the more immediate and obvious contacts that we have with those around us, this is a hard value, a hard virtue. And Hartmann writes, "The way of the creative spirit is hard."

There's something in this of the creative, because again, we're forging into new territory, giving a gift to those in the remote future who may be able to understand something that's not necessarily easily understandable now, who may be able to sense and who may have a capacity that's not readily available now. For the sake of some larger process of humanity, perhaps, and also because some people's souls are called to do that.

But this way of the creative spirit is hard. There's a creative spirit in this. And he says it is "as hard towards oneself as towards another. It's tough. It doesn't set much store by either. Both are means"—either oneself or another, regarding oneself as a means.

So in this kind of hard work, there's a tough love. One's hard on oneself. One's not soft and mollycoddling, giving in to what one needs, even though one might be isolated in that venture, in that endeavor, in that work.

"To be a means," he writes, "is what is hard for any man. All that is sensitive in him protests. Here that apriorism of sympathy must be silenced"—so even sympathy for oneself. "Another apriorism, which is also fraught with value, rises up against it: a prophetic sense of the ethical potentiality in man, his latent capacity, the future value which transcends his own person and his own environment."

I don't know if you can get a sense of the loneliness of that—the isolation, struggle, potential to be misunderstood.

There's maybe an overlap here in the realm of aesthetics. As I said, for me sometimes I'm not even sure I make a distinction between aesthetic sensibility and moral sensibility. I class them all together sometimes. But I'm reminded—if there's a similarity or overlap, I don't know—but I'm reminded of Beethoven in his late period, in his last years. He'd gone deaf quite a bit before that, but he was able to write quite brilliant music with no real loss to the quality, extraordinary quality of his music, even though he was deaf.

But in his late period, he opened out a whole new way of composing, a whole new way of thinking about music. And his contemporaries thought he'd gone mad, actually. They couldn't make head or tail of this new music—the late string quartets or some of the late piano pieces. And it wasn't that they thought, "Oh, he's gone deaf," because they knew he could write when he was deaf.

They thought he'd gone mad. They thought he'd just lost it. But he knew what he was doing, and something I think Mahler said as well, of his symphonies, when no one really listened to his music—both Beethoven and Mahler said, these are for other generations. They're for future generations.

So there's a solitude in that. There's a hard task in there, a hard duty, when your attachment, when your love, when your care is for those in the future, and the fruit of which, the thanks for which, you will never know. You won't even know if it will land. You won't know if it will be received. And in the isolation of that, there can be difficulty.

As I said, this is something Hartmann picks up on. It's a strange venture, this one, because we really don't know the future. When there's the love of the nearest, I'm dealing with these people around. I can see what they need. I can feel it. I know I'm addressing something real. There's a chance that it will... It's obvious to me that we're talking about real needs and they're reasonable needs. It's a reasonable outpouring of my love and my care and my concern.

But when there's love of the remotest, I don't know. I don't know what its actual effect will be. Maybe there won't be anything, and all this sacrifice is in vain. And not only is it in vain, but in so doing, in sacrificing, I'm actually sinning—to use Hartmann's word—against my contemporaries and those around me.

So in this respect, he says, love of the remotest is worse than any other virtue, but especially so in its damage to brotherly love, which is always sure of its immediate objects, and which, even when it does not achieve them, is sure that they are reasonable.

There's something about this—and I'll just read it again, another paragraph from Hartmann. Again, this really may not resonate with some of you, I'm sure it won't, but some of you will hear the kind of soulfulness in this, and the kind of beauty of this. And it may be for some of you that this kind of love is part, again, part of your personal soul calling. The way your personal, the way your personality, your ideal personality, your soul weighs up preferentially between different values.

This is love of the remotest nature: "Excels brotherly love and every other virtue, on certain accounts. Greatness of moral spirit, intensity of spiritual energy, which is required in the taking upon oneself of what is inherently uncertain. The venture is great. Only a deep and mighty faith, permeating a person's whole being, is equal to it. It is a faith of a unique kind, different from trust between man and man—a faith which reaches out to the whole of things and can do no other than stake all it has. It is faith on the grand scale, faith in a higher order, which determines the cosmic meaning of man. When it becomes active and carries out its schemes, its work is of historic importance."

And this energy is harmonious with a similar feeling, what he calls hope, when it is raised to its highest power—the basic feeling of ethical idealism, which bears all things and gladly suffers for an idea, with a capital I, so that transcendent moral value. Bears all things and gladly suffers for that sole sense of the values in their transcendent dimensionality, divinity, beyondness. It's love for them, never despairing. Hope—the peculiar assurance which takes hold of one who risks all on a single issue.

So again, sometimes we might find ourselves engaged in something we talk about our duty, our moral duty to our fellow human beings. Sometimes we're limited in our sense of scope of who our moral duty is. It's interesting reading moral philosophers how often they neglect the natural world and our moral duty to the natural world and our moral duty to animals. It's all very anthropocentric.

And then there's also the potential limiting just to the love of the nearest—just those who are around me

now. And not so much the vision opening to this love of the remotest. And in a way we could also add, and maybe it's actually akin to, maybe it's a different name for the same thing—our duty to the angels.

Sometimes angels want something. They always want something from us. And sometimes what they want is quite hard. It's a big ask. And sometimes we're engaged in a work that it may seem it doesn't have any bearing on or effect on our contemporary life. No one else seems to value it. It seems like it won't have any impact. But there may be a duty to the angels. And maybe the angels are the face of the remote.

The face of those souls in the far future who will have capacity.

As I said, these are three or four potentially controversial ideas, but also potentially very relevant to our considerations of both soul-making and ethics. They speak to the way in which the needs of individual souls—that realm of ethics pertaining to individual souls and their need to find their particular callings, their particular duties, to manifest and realize their ideal personality in Hartmann's words—how all that mixes with and becomes part of the bigger vision of ethics.

Regarding personhood, personality, and soul, Alistair MacIntyre, in his book *After Virtue*, talks about this from quite a different perspective—not using our language or Hartmann's language, but from his own philosophical vantage point. He explores the potential for a kind of narrative unity for a life, for a human life. There's some sense of weaving together, creating, discovering—these are my words now—a kind of soul story, narrative unity in which our identity, our particular soul, the face of our soul, is bound. This has something to do with what Hartmann would call the ideal personality, though MacIntyre uses different language.

He writes: "In what does the unity of an individual life consist?" One reason he asks this is because one of his tentative conclusions was that it's only when there's a kind of unity of a life that all the virtues make sense and find their place within that unity. Whether we need to necessarily believe that, or whether we can also have what Hillman calls a polytheistic psyche, remains an open question. Even a polytheistic psyche can have a certain unity at another level. But for MacIntyre, this idea of unity is something which makes sense of virtues. Without a sense of unity to the movement and direction of one's life, all these potentially competing values can't be assessed, judged, or placed in relative order of duty and importance for the individual.

His answer is that "its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life. To ask 'What is the good for me?'—in other words, what is the morally good for me—is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion. The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest."

A quest for what? He identifies two key features of a medieval conception of a quest that need to be recalled. First, without some at least partly determinate conception of the final telos, the final goal, there could not be any beginning to a quest. Some conception of the good is required. Second, the medieval conception of a quest is not at all that of a search for something already adequately characterized, as

miners search for gold or geologists for oil. It is in the course of the quest, and only through encountering and coping with the various particular harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which provide any quest with its episodes and incidents, that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. A quest is always an education, both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge.

His provisional conclusion about the good life is that "it is the life spent in seeking for the good life." This quest intuits partially what it's looking for. It has some sense of what's good and valuable, some sense of its final telos, and is also in its process an education, both as regards the goal and as regards the self. The virtues necessary for the seeking are those which enable us to understand what more and what else the good life is.

This offers another way of thinking about the place of personality, personhood, self, and uniqueness in our moral explorations. This quest involves search, involves eros regarding values, involves stretch, involves questioning, and is potentially—as I read what MacIntyre has written—open-ended, as the whole soul-making process is. Perhaps our exploration of morality is inevitably, or should be inevitably, inherently open-ended. We will never finish with this area.

So one idea of what unifies a human life and gives it that stamp, that mark, that face of our unique soul is our unique quest for goodness—for moral goodness, for understanding values and moving towards those values, moral and aesthetic and all that, which speak to us, which touch us, which are necessary. As I've mentioned, this might vary from person to person to a certain extent, and it might be open-ended. I think it should be open-ended.

These are some perspectives and ideas to ponder, to think about, to reflect on. Some of them, as I said, are not easy, not simple. Some of them are relatively rare in what usually gets considered in discussions of ethics and soul-making.

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