Preliminaries, Regarding Voice, Movement, and Gesture (Part 2)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 1:50:42

These movement, gesture, and voice exercises that we're exploring are intended to be added to what is already available in previous talks recorded over the years. I tried to give a list earlier, though I know there are some I'm forgetting. In fact, I remember sitting right here recording something about ensouling the voice, offering instructions or possibilities for meditation, but I cannot for the life of me recollect where that recording is. So there may be other material as well, but it's all to be taken together as a body of material—a strand within the soul-making dharma, within the practices.

Some of what we'll explore in this set of talks will repeat material from earlier recordings, and some will be unique to each. There will be material in previous talks that I won't repeat here, and conversely, there will be new material here that wasn't covered before. I'm actually curious about how many people who listened to or participated in those earlier exercises—I believe they were part of talks called "Voice, Movement and the Possibilities of Soul" on Dharma Seed—how many actually picked up those exercises and practiced them repeatedly? Even more basically, how many listened and practiced rather than simply listened? And really, how many actually incorporated those exercises into ongoing practice and developed them further?

I'm genuinely curious about this. I'm also genuinely curious that if people heard those talks or experimented briefly but didn't pursue the practices, why not? I think it would be good for all of us to be genuinely curious about this question. Why not? I mean this as a genuine inquiry, not as judgment—not the kind of "Why didn't you do that?" that becomes self-criticism about another thing we failed at or neglected.

This becomes an interesting question insofar as it might shed light on those areas and issues we touched on yesterday: inertia, and the capacity to discriminate significance or the failure to discern significance. Maybe I didn't pursue those practices because of various forms of inertia—inertia in my practice, in my relationship with practice, in what and how I practice. The form of practice can become rigidified, set in particular ways. Practice becomes something where you don't move much, don't make noise, certainly nothing loud or wild or rambunctious like some of those exercises were.

So was it partly inertia, or was it that I simply didn't discern the significance—didn't grasp these practices as something important? There were, as I mentioned yesterday, other reasons having to do with how I presented the teaching, not taking enough time, rushing through material. But insofar as this inquiry

sheds light on those two areas—inertia and the capacity to discern significance—it becomes pedagogically interesting as we go forward. Perhaps we need to take more time, really earmark something as significant, put a ring fence around it and establish it clearly as a practice.

So I'll leave that inquiry with you.

We introduced yesterday the first two exercises, and to briefly repeat some of the reasoning behind them: first, they develop sensitivity. The development of sensitivity is such an integral, necessary part of soul-making dharma practices. These practices depend so much on sensitivity—in this case, sensitivity to movement, to gesture, to voice, sensitivity to energy bodies, to space, to sound. All of this was present in exercises one and two: the possibility of developing sensitivity and recognizing how important this is in soul-making dharma practice. We're increasing both the scope of what we're sensitive to—the range of aspects of being and expression to which we're attuned—and deepening the quality of that sensitivity itself.

The second reason has to do with how we can live as human beings in this complex culture of ours, with its intricate social dynamics and psychologies, and find that our energy, our voice, our body can be held in, held back habitually. Often this happens unconsciously, not through conscious choice. We're holding ourselves back, holding ourselves in as a habitual pattern.

And that holding back of our energy and our voice, holding back of our bodily expression as well, is actually a holding back of our libido, of our life energy, of our life force, and also of our eros—again, in the larger, fuller, richer sense of that word eros. It is a holding back of our soul.

This, I think, is very, very common in our culture, and it may be common—I'm going to say more about this as we go on—it may be especially common in certain ways in some dharma cultures.

So there's the development of sensitivity in certain areas, and the increase of sensitivity both in refinement and depth, but also in scope. And there's this question: Is there a habitual holding back or holding in of my energy, of my voice, through my body, which is actually a holding back of my libido and my soul? Do I have a choice in that? Am I even conscious of that? This is very important—very, very important. I'll elaborate as we go forward.

We've talked about using this language of preliminaries and exercises. Just as it's probably obvious, if we call those exercises and the other exercises we'll give today and hopefully in the coming days preliminaries, they're also presupposing other preliminaries—for example, mindfulness, some degree of energy body awareness. So there are preliminaries that are resting on other preliminaries, you could say. That's probably obvious.

But also, if you've been listening to the teachings over the last while, even just over the last couple of years, you can see that some of what we might call preliminaries—what we might ask for as preliminaries from a practitioner as prerequisites—can then become ensouled. This relates to another thread we talked

about: the difference between foundation and root, with a root being something that can actually grow. The foundation is something that's fixed. So what is a kind of prerequisite or preliminary can then become an ensouled area and grow and be developed to other levels that we had never even anticipated or intuited or dreamt of.

This is very clear, for example, if we take two areas that we can consider as preliminaries. The energy body—we've seen that it's this kind of thing, this kind of awareness, this kind of sense of the body. People get a hang of that. But after a while, we talked about the imaginal energy body—that very sense of the energy body can become imaginal and can be related to as imaginal image. So it's not just a sort of basic instrument; it becomes itself an erotic, imaginal object. It becomes ensouled, it becomes alive and ensouled. Its depth, the range of its possibility, what it can be, how it can manifest, how we can feel it, the whole relationship with it becomes erotic and imaginal. The whole thing just balloons out exponentially to include other possibilities.

That would be one example of a preliminary or prerequisite that then becomes ensouled and completely opens out—actually infinitely—to other possibilities.

A second example would be sīla, ethics. Again, we rest our teaching as dharma teachings within the dharma framework of sīla, of ethics—in our case, the five precepts that we receive from the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, taking those very seriously as a basis. As practice develops—and I've outlined this in two sets of talks now, "Sīla and Soul" and "The Image of Ethics"—as practice develops and the soul-making dynamic starts involving ethics, sīla itself becomes... values and virtues become erotic imaginal objects, and the whole domain of sīla becomes erotically alive and alive to the soul and for the soul. Then that whole preliminary basis of the five precepts again just balloons out in complexity and depth and dimensionality and range and demand and beauty—all of that.

Those would be two examples of areas where preliminary becomes ensouled and then becomes something that's potentially the opposite of preliminary—super advanced. But the same could be said of something like dāna or even mindfulness. There are lots of possibilities in relation to this idea of preliminaries.

And again, to touch on this thread I'll keep coming back to: the why of all this. Let me repeat something I think I said yesterday. Why preliminaries? Why these exercises, these kinds of exercises? Why even think in terms of exercises or preliminaries?

As I said, we can just hope that the soul-making dynamic—we know, we've heard, or we've even had experience of what the soul-making dynamic does—will expand things. It will expand its range. It will include more and more, and it will expand something that it's got in its vortex, in its dynamics—some area or aspect of our being, our life. It expands that area, we expand with it, our understanding and our experience of that area or aspect of being expands with it, or shatters in the breaking of the vessels and has to be built in a larger way, a deeper, more full, far-reaching way.

So it might be that we can just hope that if we're practicing soul-making—we like it, we're practicing—we can just hope that the soul-making dynamic will expand, will get hold, in its expansion or in the breaking of vessels that happens occasionally from time to time. Sometimes it's just a stretch, sometimes it's actually a shattering. In that whole process, over time, eventually it will just, by itself, come to involve and include and ensoul movement, gesture, voice. We can just hope for that, because that's what the soul-making dynamic does.

However, if those areas—movement, gesture, and voice, or some directions and possibilities within movement, gesture, and voice—if the blocks there that we have are really entrenched, if they're entrenched enough, then the power of expansion of the soul-making dynamic propelled by eros and the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, if the blocks are more entrenched and effectively more powerful than the soul-making dynamic at that point, it won't ensoul those areas, or those possibilities within those areas. Sometimes it does.

Sometimes the eros in the soul-making act simply does its work—it overcomes or stretches those walls, those blocks we've explored before, whether they arise from eros, psyche, logos, or elsewhere. But sometimes that same force encounters barriers it cannot penetrate. The blocks have become too entrenched, too deeply rooted. When this happens, those areas remain outside the soul-making dynamic. They cannot be ensouled. Certain possibilities simply won't open. The movement stops there, the walls remain unmoved, the limitations stay exactly where they are.

Can we know in advance whether any blocks we carry—often unconsciously—will prove weaker or stronger than the soul-making dynamic's push? How could we predict whether the fermentation and force of soul-making will successfully penetrate those particular areas of our being and life as it reaches them? I don't believe we can know this beforehand.

Certainly, in many cases the dynamic does expand those limits, pushing open walls, creating and discovering new possibilities—new roads for soul, new territories and landscapes to explore. But inevitably there will be blocks and walls that soul encounters in its process that it simply cannot overcome. The movement stops there. Those areas remain unreachable, unopened. No entry. The road remains closed.

What does it actually mean for movement, gesture, and voice to be ensouled? When we speak of these aspects of our being becoming ensouled, what exactly are we pointing toward? I believe it means at least two significant things, both quite profound.

First, it means that when soul wants to express and communicate through or using these aspects of our being—movement, gesture, voice—it can. These domains become available. Roads open within them, travel becomes possible, expansion can occur. The degree of possible development here is infinite. Consider the analogy of music and how completely open-ended the development of these arts can be—the art of movement in dance, of gesture, of voice. The art of soul expressing through these media has no

limits in terms of depth, height, or breadth. What some artists achieve is simply staggering, not merely in technical mastery, but in the profound soul power that flows through great art when deep technique couples with the full dimensions of soul.

For most of us, though, this availability probably manifests more simply—as soul expressing naturally in everyday life, in living soulfully or fulfilling what we might call our soul duties. When soul wants to express and communicate through these aspects of being, it can. This might involve developing movement, gesture, or voice to some degree, perhaps even extraordinarily, but more likely it means these channels remain open for soul's ordinary manifestation in daily life. Nothing bars these directions and domains from being ensouled; nothing prevents soul from flowing through and expressing itself in and through these aspects of our being.

The second meaning is equally important: the movement, gesture, and voice of oneself or another—in their everyday, ordinary usages—can be sensed with soul. A voice simply speaking in conversation, exclaiming something; a hand moving as it accompanies speech—these ordinary expressions of movement, gesture, and voice can be sensed as angelic, as refracting the angel, the daemon. They are perceived as dimensional, unfathomable, divine in origin, echoing the eternal.

These two meanings of what it means for movement, gesture, and voice to be ensouled are both essential if we speak of opening our lives to soul-making or allowing our lives to be open to soul.

I've shared about what I call my grief—though perhaps regret captures it better—particularly regarding jazz guitar improvisation and the technical mastery I never achieved. When people ask about approaching death and whether there's anything I regret, I can honestly say there's just one thing.

And it's that. Why the word regret? Because even though I did go to music school and conservatory, you actually end up having to figure out a lot of stuff on your own, especially if you're doing jazz. You have to find your own ways to do things, your own avenues that you're interested in and develop them.

So there were plenty of things, even within jazz, that I figured out on my own, so to speak—picking up different pieces here and there, following my intuition, following my eros, essentially, and playing, experimenting, creating, discovering. Plenty of things I figured out on my own. And looking back, of course, I could have chosen technique in the sense that I was talking about the other day, this particular kind of technical area. I could have chosen that as something to focus on and say, "Let me just really try and figure this out and get really interested in it."

But actually, I effectively chose other areas instead—other areas of music, other areas of guitar playing as well. And I developed them. That was wonderful and very fruitful and beautiful. But I could have chosen technique. So it's actually a kind of regret. Yes, I wasn't taught it because, as I said, there wasn't the pedagogy there at that time. But I could have just kept bashing away in this kind of dogged way that one has if one really wants something. But I didn't. I chose other things instead. So there's regret. There's some

responsibility that falls on me.

So in a way, offering these particular teachings now—offering them so that there's the possibility that you can practice. Practice so that you don't end up regretting. That you don't end up regretting not supporting yourself fully or allowing yourself or enabling yourself fully to move in the direction or be moved in the direction of what you want with respect to soul-making dharma. And also what you want with respect to soul in life—the expression and the living of soul in life, your soul in your life. We must call that soul-making dharma. It's not something separate.

So offering these is part of why I share the story of that grief and regret. Because sometimes there are things that are really important to our soul, and it's only the fact that we didn't take care of some really basic nuts and bolts that we actually were not able then to reap the benefit and play in the fields of the territories that we would have loved to explore.

So this offering is so that you have that choice, and you have a conscious choice. You can practice so you don't regret.

We said yesterday that these are small pieces, these exercises, this emphasis on movement, gesture, voice, and the exercises we'll do—they're kind of small, little small pieces, but they're indispensable, both. So they're not super central, not a super big deal, but they're indispensable, both. There's a kind of—not contradictory, but two sides of that statement, obviously.

How do you pick it up? What does hearing something like that do to your relationship and attitude to this whole notion of preliminaries and exercises and these particular ones that we're working through?

You probably want to avoid two extremes here. There's the "small pieces" side—therefore one hears "nah, it's not important," and one maybe never bothers to do these exercises. Or, well, okay, I do them once or twice. That would be one extreme, and I think it would probably be a mistake for most people. Maybe not for everyone, but for most people.

The other extreme you want to avoid is when you hear this "small pieces but indispensable" and therefore drop everything else and spend hours every day doing these exercises, vowing to do no other practices until you've completed three years of just these exercises every day or whatever it is.

As usual, a little bit of middle way can go a long way—bringing some intelligence here, knowing one's patterns, recognizing the kinds of inertia one typically gets entrenched in, falls into. All that's really important. As usual, it's really about discernment and intelligence and applying that to one's practice.

And just a small but important practical thing that I didn't say yesterday: if anything in these exercises, for any reasons—physical reasons or reasons of your health—if any part of an exercise or any exercise feels like that wouldn't be good for my body or that's just not possible for my body or it would be dangerous or something (which is the case for me at this point for one or two of these things), just don't do it or adapt it.

Find, get, understand, discern what the kernel of it is, what the point is, and adapt it. Adapt it to your body, your body's condition right now, and the needs and capabilities of your body right now.

Okay, so let's move on and introduce exercise three. Now again, there are five exercises within this, so whether it's actually exercise three or exercise series three—it doesn't matter.

But there's five within them, I'll go through them. Again, each of these five could be done physically—concretized into actual movement and vocalization. It could be done concretely, physically, or it can be done just with the energy body, in the sense of the energy body, in the imagination only, where there's nothing physical or audible, perceptible there.

So each of the five can be done in either or both of those ways, and I would encourage exploring both—really, really encourage exploring both the concrete physical and the not concretized, not physicalized, just the energy body, just the image sense.

I can give these sort of little nicknames to these five. I'm not sure I'm such a fan of the nicknames—I've just come up with them very hastily—but it doesn't really matter. You could just go by numbers or you can make your own nickname.

The first one of the five, I've just called something like Thunderclap or Thunder and Lightning. But don't take that too literally and don't take it too narrowly either. What I mean by this exercise, what I want to get at by this exercise—and I think this one is really, really important—actually this one more than any other of all the exercises I'm offering was the start of this idea that something needs to be offered. It would be a good idea to offer something. This one I think is very important.

What I mean is: the object is an emphatic, brief or sudden gesture or movement, maybe with a vocalization, but the whole thing is maybe two seconds, roughly. Something very emphatic and relatively short. If there's a vocalization, it's also relatively short.

But within that, emphatic means there's force in it. There's power in it. There's energy and strength in it. And there is soul coming through. In this case, I mean soul in a slightly more limited sense, or rather as a minimum in a limited sense. It may come through in this fully imaginal sense, but I don't necessarily mean that at the start. It's just an exercise. I mean soul coming through—I mean soul as the spirit, the life force, the being, the person, the energy.

And really, it's coming through in a consolidation, in a gesture, in a movement, in a vocalization that consolidates, coheres, coalesces mind, intention, soul and body, in and through body movement, gesture or voice.

So something like just a stamp of the foot and maybe some kind of gesture with the arms or the fists, or just a gesture with the arms, or just stamping the feet, or a kick, or a step, or a karate chop. It's the movement itself. Anyone can do the movement—well, some of us can't do these kinds of movement at this

point. But most people without physical difficulty can do something like that movement.

What's much harder is to have that sense of real coming together, coherence, congruence, consolidation, coalescence, integration. In that brief two seconds, the integration of mind, intention, body, person, in and through the body, movement, gesture, and voice.

And again, the vocalization could be anything. It could be a "ha," or a slightly longer tone. It really doesn't matter. And again, it could be spontaneous—you don't actually know what you're going to do. You just feel the impulse and let that coalesce and let it come out. Or it could be precise—you've rehearsed it and you know exactly what it looks like and what it's going to sound like and you do that. This will apply to all of these five examples: those two alternatives.

It would be easier if you could see me and I could demonstrate, even though I'm very limited in what I could do physically right now. But I hope you can get the sense of this. When someone is doing Kung Fu or Karate, in a way that's what they're doing. They chop bricks or whatever it is, or they make a move. That's part of their training: to bring everything together—mind, intention, soul and body like that.

And it's surprisingly rare, and in some circles it's even more rare than it might be in other circles. So can I do this? Can I train in doing that?

And as I said, I think this is the most important one, perhaps even of everything I'm going to offer. There are reasons for me saying that, which I'll come back to. But it may be that you just think, well, I don't know, that doesn't sound very interesting at all. Just notice your response.

After you've done your gesture, if this was on retreat—if we were doing this on retreat and I was introducing this—I would say, okay, the way we're going to do this is, let's say we have this whole week retreat. Every day you're going to come into an interview room with me, and I'm going to sit there while you do this thunderclap or thunder and lightning movement, gesture, vocalization thing. You just come in, prepare yourself, and then you do it in front of me while I'm watching you.

Then after you do it, you assess it. Maybe you say, "Oh yeah, felt like I wasn't quite in my feet there," or "I could feel I was holding back a little in my voice," or "I could feel like the energy was really coming through, but it was more hysterical than coherent. It wasn't really congruent."

And then after you assess, I assess. I assess you.

This might sound odd in our culture, in our dharma culture—a kind of little exam where you have to do something in front of the teacher and then they assess you. I'll explain why that would even be part of it in a retreat setting. Of course, if you're not in a retreat setting, then either you have to do it on your own and assess yourself, or you could do it with a dharma friend.

But I think even the ability to really read these things in another person and sense them is quite rare and something that needs developing. It will probably only develop through practice for most people—through

doing it oneself. Then some people will develop the ability to sense these things with other people. We can be easily misled in these areas, very easily misled, and that's something I'll come back to later.

So again, if we were in a retreat setting and I was introducing this, I'd say, "Come once a day. You're going to do this thing. It will be a thread through your retreat." You can practice these exercises on your own as much as you want in motionless silent meditation, as I said, just with the energy body and with the imaginal sense. And you can also practice—for example, if we were at Gaia House—you can go out onto the grounds and just practice as much as you want. Then once a day, you'd come and do this thing.

I'll come back to what that assessment bit is about. Anyway, that's number one. So I hope I've conveyed something there. It would be easier to just see me, but anyway, we're recording this.

That's the first one. The second thread of this exercise is—and again, I'm not sure about the name—something like "born aloft by angels."

Here, not two seconds. Maybe you've got a maximum of two minutes. You don't have to use all that time—a maximum of two minutes. Certainly more than twenty or thirty seconds, but somewhere between, let's say, thirty seconds and two minutes.

You let your body, or you express with your body, the image of being born aloft by angels. Somehow these beings who have no weight are bearing you aloft, holding up your body on these gossamer threads of love and light, making your body buoyant, floating, light, weightless. Your body can give itself to being held by the angels and moved by these angels.

The body, in giving itself, can become fluid. Your body becomes fluid in this—almost the way that sometimes when they celebrate at a party, you can lift someone up, and if there's enough people, you can pass them along. Or in a big crowd or at a concert, you know, pass people along hand to hand. A big crowd passes a person along. Something like that, but much more delicate and almost ethereal.

The body becomes fluid in surrendering oneself to that being held and being moved. Another part of it is the surrendering oneself—surrendering one's energy body and physical body and heart as much as possible, and soul.

Probably in this one there's no vocal component. It's just moving your body in a way that expresses that as much as possible. And again, if we were on retreat, you and I might take turns in assessing that.

The third part of this exercise, or the third exercise in this series of exercises, is what we might call "the raging beast."

I don't know what even comes up in your mind now as a reaction when you hear "raging beast." Of course there are many types of beast. Some have tails, some have horns, some have fangs, some have teeth, some have tongues—all kinds of stuff. Many kinds of beasts. We're not going to put a limit on that. It's just a raging beast or the raging beast.

Maybe it's a ravenous beast, maybe it's not. Maybe it's just raging. Careful how you hear this. Do you hear "raging beast" and then hear evil, for instance, or ill-will? I certainly don't hear that implication. To me, it doesn't imply that at all. So I want to be very clear about this: it does not necessarily imply evil or ill-will.

Again, somewhere between thirty seconds and two minutes. It might be that within those thirty seconds to two minutes, there are bursts. So you have a little burst of letting this thing come through your body, or feeling into your body, and the movement and gesture and vocalization that might come with that. Then that subsides a little, you let it go, and you gather the intention, gather the citta, gather the energy, body, awareness, and then do it again. Another burst of, you know, up to fifteen seconds, whatever it is. This is all quite loose. Or it may be just two minutes straight—you're just really in this thing. Whatever.

Again, vocalization is possible but not necessary. So maybe sometimes you do it and there are vocals that come with it, sometimes not. Maybe try both ways. And again, depending on the context, we would both take turns in assessing that, getting more discerning and discriminating about what's working there, what's blocked, what's being included, what the issues are, what areas of the body or ranges are opening or not.

The fourth one is something we might call the immovable protector or the immovable guardian. Maybe they're human, maybe they're inhuman, maybe they're demonic, maybe they're angelic, maybe they're animal. Maybe they're some kind of mythic creature. It doesn't really matter.

The immovable protector or guardian—what are they protecting? Maybe they're protecting the earth. Maybe they're protecting in relation to some kind of social injustice or racial injustice. That might change from time to time. What's core here is this immovable protector or immovable guardian.

Again, a maximum of two minutes. It may be that within those two minutes it's broken up into little bursts of expression, of movement, gesture, voice—perhaps up to fifteen seconds, then gathering, stopping, regrouping, another burst. It may be, even in the name "immovable protector," that there's very little movement. But in the stance, in the gesture, in the feel of the energy body, the being, the mind, the soul, that image of an immovable protector guardian is gathered and expressed and manifest.

So maybe a lot of movement, maybe a little movement, maybe very little movement, or even no movement. But it's in the gesture, it's in the stance, it's in the posture, it's in the feel of the energy body, or it may be in the voice. And again, if we were in a certain context, we would do this double assessment.

The fifth one I'm just going to call the serpent. The serpent. But I'm not going to say anything about it. What does it mean, the serpent? What might it mean? What's the range of possibility that it might mean? The serpent. Again, maybe up to two minutes, and may include vocal, maybe not. The serpent. There are a couple of deliberate reasons I'm not saying anything in terms of what that might be.

So five parts, each possibly both concretized and physical, or just in the energy body, just in the imaginal sense, image sense, imaginative sense—because as I said, it might not be completely imaginal, and that's

fine. And also, as mentioned, it might be that they're just spontaneous and improvised movements, gestures, vocalizations, or it might be that they're quite rehearsed and you know precisely what the body and voice are going to do beforehand. So try both ways.

Those are the five, with variations, for what we'll call exercise series number three.

A little bit more about the why. As I said, especially that first one—what we're calling the thunderclap, or thunder and lightning—this ability to really gather the citta, the intention, the soul, the mind, the body, the movement, the gesture, the voice, to gather it powerfully into one coherent, congruent expression, gesture, movement, energy—it's quite rare.

And I have come to wonder recently whether it's even rarer in some Dharma circles, including our own. This capacity to actually gather everything—the citta, intention, soul, mind, body, movement, gesture, voice—into one coherent, congruent expression seems quite rare. In different ways, a person avoids it, never manifests it, falls short of it, falls shy of it, prevents it, has a bit of it but with a hollow space in the middle. There are many, many possibilities for how we avoid this wholeness.

Often that kind of coherence of body, mind, energy and soul is missing as a possibility. It's like the circuits are simply not there, or they're cut, or they're missing. When these circuits are severed, something profound happens: certain kinds and ranges of images won't arise for a soul-making practitioner interested in imaginal practice. Something is blocked in those circuits, and it limits what arises imaginally.

As we said before, if the eros-psyche-logos dynamic is strong enough—more powerful in its movement than whatever blocks or limits or holdings are there—then an image can arise that actually breaks open those walls, reconnects those circuits. A flame, a spark jumps over, and in jumping over, connects two points, reignites, makes available again, reconfigures that circuit. This comes from the power of the soul-making dynamic constellating an image, and that image does something. The power of the image is allowed to do something, or has enough soul-making power to reconstitute, reconfigure, reform that circuit.

But oftentimes, as I said, that won't happen. These circuits remain cut, and certain kinds of images, a certain range of images, simply won't arise in practice. They can't, because the circuit is severed. It's cut in relationship to movement, gesture, voice, energy, body, possibility, and self-view—all kinds of things are involved.

Without those images, there won't be soul-making in that direction. There won't be soul-making in formal practice, in meditation practice in that direction, because the circuits are cut. But it may also be the case that there won't be soul and soul-making in certain areas of one's life—no possibility of ensoulment in certain directions of duty and certain kinds of manifestation.

Both these lacunae, both these gaps—the impossibility of certain images arising and the impossibility of soul opening, traveling, moving, manifesting in certain directions in one's life—have profound

consequences. They affect one's psychology, one's whole psyche, the heart, relationships with others, one's duties in life including soul duties, possibilities for one's life, work, life choices we make. And we may not even realize this is happening, or understand why we're making this choice and not that choice. We don't realize it's because this circuit is blocked, unavailable. Therefore the soul-making and the soul cannot move in that direction, and certain choices don't even occur to us.

This kind of pattern often operates beneath our awareness, setting all kinds of consequences—psychological, emotional, relational, in terms of work, life choices, duties, possibilities. Some will say about these exercises: "I don't know, this just isn't me," or "It's not relevant to me." They might participate a few times but feel it's just not interesting or applicable. It will seem that way, but actually it's because the circuit is cut. This makes it very hard to discern what's really going on.

All this is by way of saying: be careful if you have resistance to some of these exercises. Such resistance is probably very normal, and of course you're free to do whatever you want, to pick up and put down as you choose. I'm simply inviting you to take care, to have a closer look, to engage in real questioning and inquiring, rummaging around and wondering.

In this case, it means wondering about one's whole life and the patterns of one's life. It's not just wondering about how you felt in that moment when someone suggested an exercise and you thought, "Yeah, okay" or listened and felt, "All right." The invitation is to really inquire: is there something here—a much larger trajectory, or absence of trajectory, patterning, limitation, blind spots, incapacities, impossibilities?

You can do what you want, but I offer this invitation to take care and to really inquire. If you try these practices once or twice and then neglect them, again the question arises: why?

Why would you neglect this? And again, as a real question, as a genuine inquiry.

As I said, it's not that everyone needs to do all this, because some people may already have all that range available—if we just talk about these five we just talked about today, or include the ones we did yesterday—may already have all that range available. It's all there vividly and vitally and juicily and soulfully in image, in the energy body, in their physical body and voice in the manifestation there, available in their life. For some people, it's all there, right? "I'm not really interested in spending my time doing that," and yes, why would you need to? You don't need to. I don't need to practice the C major scale again, or practice that particular technique again, because I've taken it as far as it's going to be developed. I can move on to developing other things.

But just to know that if that's not the case, if all that range is really not available, or not really available in the range of images, in the energy body, in the physical body, in the life, in the directions of one's life, in the expressions and manifestations of one's life—then there will be consequences. Most likely there will be consequences, there will be further consequences, and those consequences will include limitations on

soul-making in life. There'll be consequences to neglecting and not picking up and just kind of giving in to one's inertia without really examining it and questioning it.

So always the choice must be yours. You must have that autonomy. But just a real—you can hear it's a strong encouragement to inquire and to question: do I really know what's going on for me here? And here doesn't just mean here and now; it means in my life, in the patterns of my life, in the choices of my life, in the directions I end up taking and not taking.

Some of these examples we said take two seconds or three seconds or less to do. But the circuits they need may have been shut down or short-circuited or chopped or snipped or whatever for decades. Decades. So it can seem like the exercise is really not a big deal—this is a two-second thing. But the circuits that they need, or the circuits that are involved in these exercises, or that these exercises in a way are trying to reinstate, may have been shut down for decades.

And therefore it may take repeated practice, certainly maybe a long time of practice, to be able to do these exercises well, to do them properly. Even that first one I was talking about, this sort of sudden, emphatic, thunderous gesture and movement and vocalization—to really show up there, coalesce with force, with all my soul force and power, not held back, embodied, fully embodied, fully congruent. It may take a while to do them well, to do them properly, to develop that.

All this is not for the sake of self-empowerment. It's not for the sake of winning friends and influencing people. It's not for the sake of making you more attractive. It's not for the sake of making you more whole or more integrated. It's not for the sake of some kind of catharsis—"Oh yeah, get my anger out" or whatever it is.

But it's primarily so that, as I said, if the soul wants to manifest in image, in energy body, in emotion, or in life and in duty in life, using these kinds of faces, expressing these kinds of theophanies—if that's what soul wants through you, through image, through energy body, through emotion, through life and duty—if that's what soul wants, it can. That's the primary purpose for these kinds of exercises.

Secondarily, through that, I think, through doing these exercises and some of the ones we've done on other retreats as well, and some of the ones we did yesterday, it can also, as I said, begin to awaken and ignite the possibility of sensing our everyday movement, gesture, and vocalizations of them being sensed with soul, without them being in any way extraordinary. And this is part of sensing ourselves and sensing others with soul. Other aspects of the being, other aspects of life begin to be dimensionalized in that way, as we said.

So why this business about the assessment and the sort of exam situation? Very unusual in our dharma tradition. Of course, in other dharma traditions it's rare, but it does exist absolutely in other Buddhist dharma traditions. Why would I include that if we were in a different situation, if we were actually on retreat and I was introducing this? Why?

Because being seen and judged makes it usually, for most people, more challenging. One gets self-conscious, one holds back, all kinds of reasons. Someone doesn't even know the reason. But that's actually part of it. Because again, if we think about what the relationship here is between these exercises and the possible manifestations or duties, work, whatever it is that soul will ask you to do, will want you to do—those two, the manifestations of your duties, will be seen and judged in the world and by the world.

And what happens then? What happens to our energy, to our voice, to our expression through the body when we feel or know that we are being seen and judged in and by the world?

So putting that piece in—the assessment, the examination element—actually makes it more difficult usually and more challenging. And that's actually part of it, because that reflects, mimics the actual situation that soul finds itself in, in life. Soul is in life. And so that's what we need to work with.

And still, I wonder if it can be hard, not easy to understand why these exercises, why we're introducing this. So I've introduced it with a few people now, just a few. And sometimes in the exchanges, trying to explain it, sometimes the person understands immediately—but actually it's often easier when I'm demonstrating something that they seem to understand immediately. But then often after that, they sort of forget and they veer off into something else. Something's happened—the practice has diverted, or they forget. Something that they understood instantaneously with me working one-on-one in a room with them, showing them something, and they just got it immediately through me giving examples with body, voice and gesture, and they seemed to get it and it was all fine. And then it just kind of veers off into something else. They've lost the understanding of why, or they forget, or they drag in other kinds of propensities or habits of view.

Or what can happen is, if I'm not demonstrating, it's actually very difficult for a person to understand what it is that we're talking about or why this is important. Sometimes even working with a person with energy body and voice, it can feel very alien, or they're not really sure what we're getting at, or they can't really tell the difference in two movements or vocalizations they made. They can't really even tell the difference between them in regard to what we're talking about—how much one is there, how much it's radiating and filling a space, these kinds of things.

Or sometimes I might suggest to a person, "Why don't you learn to sing that song and sing it in a way with the full energy and really with the whole body, like we were talking about in yesterday's exercises, and with the whole presence there and being and person coming through, and not held back in the voice and the body and all of that." And I remember one person suggesting, the first time I suggested the idea, he was saying, "You know, choose something like a heavy metal song or a punk song or something." And that was a misdirection in terms of the teaching I gave. It can be that genre, but actually the singer, if we're talking about singers, is quite held back and contracted, and they're not really fully in their voice, or fully—their body is not really expressing things.

And it might, at a superficial glance, be quite hard to even discern in other people. It might look like, well,

the guy's raging around and jumping about on stage, and he's clearly very angry about something or other, but actually there's a tremendous amount of contraction and block there, and the voice is almost being squeezed out through a tiny little hole. Or with this song and that song, we don't recognize where this singer is actually fully, let's say, not holding back in their voice. They're fully inhabiting their voice and their energy is fully inhabiting the space that they're in and fully reaching the audience, the physical space that they're in, and their whole body is involved, and their whole body is emanating, radiating the sound and the song and the spirit of the song. And other times it can be hard for someone to realize when that's the case and when it's not the case. They're both good songs, they're both good singers. We're talking about something else here.

Or, as I said, might be, try this with people and they just didn't—I don't know, that just didn't land. It just doesn't seem—I don't think that's relevant to me. It might be for other people, I don't think it's relevant to me, or I don't think I need that. Or it just doesn't interest me. So that's also something that I've encountered.

In exactly those instances, I would really disagree with their assessment there. It's precisely a small but absolutely indispensable piece that they don't have yet, that's very relevant, that they do need, and that they should be interested in, would be my opinion. So it's really interesting what can happen here in terms of the whole sense and view of this whole area. It can just completely pass one by, like we just don't recognize there's anything of significance or value or personal relevance here at all.

Or for other people it can be just the whole thing—and I think this was the case when we did those exercises in that retreat, which admittedly were, some of them were quite intense, but some of them were comical. And the person can be—was it the voice movement? Possibly it was the Soul retreat, I think. And I think for a couple of people it's just so alien. Those kinds of ranges of vocalization or expression or manifestation or body or gesture, just really unusual for them. And not at all what they associate with spirituality or dharma or anything like that. Now, they might not even say that, perhaps out of respect, but it's there. And it just doesn't fit a kind of picture or idea or view that they have. And it's very, very alien.

So, to me, this is not just the doing of it, but also the whole sense of it, and the whole capacity to discern both its significance, but also its presence or its absence. As we were just talking about the first of these five exercises, we could talk about any of them, this is something that can be strikingly undeveloped for practitioners who, in other ways, may be very well developed. Very well developed. So I find that really, really interesting.

Sometimes, again, I'm still on the why aspects. Sometimes working with someone in an interview one-to-one or whatever, and it might be there's an emotion or a dukkha or a frustration or something that's there that they've brought in—maybe they weren't even aware of it when they came in, maybe they were aware of it, it doesn't matter.

This emerges—this emotion, this dukkha, this frustration. And with guidance, with one-to-one guidance,

they can help to relate to that emotion, dukkha, or frustration so that it opens something, creates something, instigates something in the energy body, perhaps as an image. Maybe both, maybe in any order—perhaps the image comes first, then the energy body experience, or vice versa.

Here's this difficulty, and then with guidance and the kind of crucible of care that's there, something emerges, or it transforms. The alchemy there allows something to transubstantiate, really, and manifest in the energy body as image. And that manifestation in the energy body and as image opens up, in that moment, a whole new sense of self and also a sense of the body. I've given different examples of that over the years in talks. That would be quite a common occurrence.

But often what happens is that new sense of self and open sense of body—whatever capacity, etc.—will revert back to the usual shapes and structures. And oftentimes that reversion happens after not very long at all. Sometimes not, but that's also quite common.

When it happens, it's quite a dramatic experience—the sense of something alchemically emerging in the energy body and the image, the beauty and power of the image, the soul being touched by the image, and the new sense of self. It's all like, "Wow."

But the purpose here in these exercises is not so much the wow and the dramatic experience. What we have in those examples from interviews is a kind of dramatic, usually dramatic emergence of something that does very understandably trigger a kind of wow response, and is a dramatic, compelling experience. This is not what we're aiming for here.

It's more like, as I said, we're talking about etudes—or even less than etudes. Certainly in these first three exercises, they're more like just scales or technical exercises. They're not necessarily going to feel amazing. They probably won't. I mean, they might do, actually—you really don't want to limit things. But the point is to view them more as scales and technical exercises.

On that point, and again thinking about pedagogy in a larger way, if you were to ask me, looking back over my Dharma practice and retreats and all that, about dramatic experiences and dramatic openings that I've had over the years, I could describe many, I'm sure. I could say, "Oh, that happened in this situation, that other thing happened in that situation," whatever it is. So I could tell you about dramatic experiences and dramatic openings.

But if you ask me another question—what has made really long-term differences in terms of long-term openings or long-term being helpful long-term—the answer would not necessarily be the same as dramatic experiences.

I think about, for example, different week or ten-day retreats that I've done. There have been a number where I could say, "Oh yes, it was on that week retreat where I had that experience—that was pretty amazing. And on that other week retreat that dramatic experience happened." But the answer to the second question about what made long-term differences would not be the same.

Actually, what seems to have made long-term differences, if I'm answering this question just for myself now, is the possibility or when I have been able to repeat something—repeat a practice, do it over and over again. A practice or approach that's helpful, relevant, but also has some eros for me, that's alive for me, that's growthful, and that's an edge, and that therefore is interesting and exciting.

And I've been in a situation—either because I'm on personal retreat and I don't have to listen to everyday new instructions from the teacher and go along with the group, I've been on personal retreat and I just follow my own thread there and develop this thing, develop this practice that I'm exploring or discovering—or in everyday life, just every day getting on a track of something that I'm really interested in and repeating it, developing it, growing with it.

So that would be more my answer to what has really made genuine long-term difference in helpful ways, different kinds of helpful ways. The answers to what has been amazing, dramatic, wow experiences—how much does it overlap with my answer to what has really made long-term, genuine, genuinely helpful differences?

If I asked you the same question, what would you think? What would you answer? And careful not to confuse the wow factor, the feel-good factor, the dramatic factor with what makes a long-term difference. That may be something you want to reflect on. Of course, you might have a different answer, but it may be something you want to reflect on.

I've been on other retreats—I remember going on some Goenka retreats and getting a lift back with a group of people in a big truck or van. We were all talking and listening, and a lot of them, it seemed, had come from backgrounds where they were really kind of—I don't know what the word would be—like they partied hard. They had very little discipline in their lives, and some of them had addiction issues, and that's how they would put it.

And then they came on a Goenka retreat, and it's suddenly almost like being thrown into a high-discipline prison sort of structure compared to their life, where there was no discipline. Sit, sit, sit. They don't even walk—just sit, sit, sit. And sit through the pain again, again, again, many hours a day.

And for quite a few of these people, it seemed that doing this ten-day ultra-disciplined Goenka course for them really did kind of dramatically break the momentum of the unhelpful patterns in their life.

The lack of discipline in their lives, the hard partying, and whatever else—being thrown into that context of the Goenka retreat with all its discipline and pressure and intensity, that continuity of intense effort, created a dramatic break. After the retreat, this dramatic break was enough to generate a kind of momentum that could change their everyday practice and life, helping them maintain discipline and good habits they felt they had previously lacked.

So it may well be that in those kinds of cases, drama and the dramatic "wow" experience—even if dramatically unpleasant, though often there would be a breakthrough in the retreat and things would

become easier and pleasant—did allow and support more long-term helpful changes in life as well.

But will it be the same in other styles or emphases of practice? Soul-making retreats, for example, have a very different flavor. The whole tenor, atmosphere, what we're doing, how we're doing it—the flavor of softness as opposed to intense pressure and effort—all these things are different. Particularly what we're doing and how we approach it is not the same.

So it may not apply in the same way. The fact that you go somewhere and have an amazing experience—so beautiful on that seven-day soul-making retreat, or perhaps a metta retreat, or some other kind where something touches one deeply—of course that's important and lovely, but it doesn't necessarily translate into making a long-term difference.

This is something to think about as we go forward as a sangha with soul-making. Pedagogically, we need to consider: is this model of week-long group retreats really the most fertile, the most soul-making in the end? Beautiful as the experience of that week can be, touching as some of those experiences are, might it be that something more steady—courses, classes, groups—actually provides more support? A different kind of support, but a necessary kind of support for making a real, more long-term difference in terms of soul and soul-making, what soul needs.

I don't know, I'm just thinking about it. But really, with these exercises, think of them more as technical exercises, like practicing scales, as opposed to something that's going to suddenly create an amazing experience because this image came or that something happened. It might be, but that's not the point so much, and that's certainly not how we should judge them.

It's something like practicing scales, or to shift the analogy from musician to instrument—if you had a piano where certain keys get stuck when they're not played regularly, so when you press them, no sound comes out, then you try to play or improvise something and reach that note only to find nothing comes because the key is stuck. This isn't a perfect analogy, but perhaps if those keys were played more regularly, they could be freed up so they don't get stuck, making them available for the music.

What we're really talking about again is what soul might need. Yes, there are psychological health reasons why these exercises might be beneficial for some people at certain stages of their lives. But even those psychological health reasons can be conceived as being on a continuum with soul reasons. The soul might need that kind of psychological health. The soul might need for those circuits to be connected, working, and available in movement, gesture, body, and voice. As I've said, there may be consequences—all kinds of consequences that aren't necessarily obvious at all.

Sometimes what happens is we don't let certain kinds of body movement or expression, certain manifestations of voice, into the body, into the possibilities of movement and gesture. It might be certain—I'm going to use the word "dark," though it can mean many different things—some of the darker faces and expressions given as examples in exercise number three. Again, this has nothing to do with evil;

I'm not using those words synonymously at all. But they're not let into the body. The body is not open to that. The expression, voice, gesture, and movement are not open to that.

Sometimes those kinds of things may come as images for a person, but it may not be enough. It may be that their soul wants more images like that, or a fuller range, or more depth to images like that, and we're only getting a trickle of what could come through. Or it may be that having images alone is not enough—I'll come back to that.

It may even be that in blocking the dark images, somehow there's also a blocking of more—if you like—light images. More conventionally or traditionally angelic kinds of images. This isn't obvious at all. Because I'm not letting this darkness into the body, there's also a block in my imaginal practice of a certain range of light images. We want the whole range of images. Soul wants the whole range of images to be available.

Remember that talk, "The Spreading of Five Wings," I think it's called. This very much has to do with inertia and limits and blocks and ideas and stuck places and contractions—five kinds of range that we want to check we're open to.

The spreading of five wings, I think it was called. We want the whole range of images. Soul wants the whole palette to be available for its art. And it wants that not just in imaginal practice, but also in the body and in the voice, in the expressions of body and voice, movement, gesture, and so forth. So there are consequences—consequences for our formal practice, consequences for our life, consequences for what soul can do. Maybe other consequences as well.

It might be that, for example, in not letting some of the kinds of movement, gesture and voice that we've pointed to in the exercises today, in exercise number three, it may be that this also affects how we are with anger. So it might be that in not opening up the circuits in the body and the voice in these ways, this actually affects the mind in terms of anger. And the kind of anger that's possible then doesn't have body and voice in it. It might also not have a range of images, as we said, in it. It has a very narrow range.

And in that narrowness, it might be a couple of things. It might be then that the mind gets into quite black and white thinking and viewing. And that's something that often goes with anger when anger is not so healthy—it gets very black and white, the thinking and the viewing. But there may well be a relationship between the prevention, the absence, the block, the non-existence of those circuits of movement, gesture and voice, and the entrenchment and habit of black and white thinking and viewing.

Even when things are rosy and we think something's wonderful—and that's just all taken as the truth. It really is this way. This person really is that way. We never think, what's the connection? And I think there's a connection between what we allow to move through and to open through and open in and as movement, gesture, voice—what's available there. There's a connection between that and something like the kind of black and white thinking and viewing that's really not helpful, certainly not when there's

anger, but also when there's a kind of positive assessment of something. Even if you're praising someone, they might end up feeling a little bit put in a box that they don't feel comfortable with, even if you're saying this or that about them or about something they've done. But actually, it's black and white. It's something entrenched.

This is connected with the second aspect I wanted to draw a link to. Because something can be brittle here, without letting things, without opening up the movement, gesture, voice in these kinds of ways. Something can get not just black and white in our thinking, viewing, when we're angry or when there's positivity, but also then brittle. And again, if we're talking about anger, that anger can be merely cold anger, and that's all that's available to me, as opposed to a hot, juicy anger. Cold anger is not far from hatred in certain ways of using those words. But cold anger is also kind of brittle.

And again, there's a kind of brittleness that can come into the being through just through the non-availability of some of these circuits with regard to body and voice. Anger can be brittle and not have depth to it, not have juice, not have—I don't know, I'm thinking of a spicy, juicy curry sauce. It doesn't have that in it. There's something cold and brittle in it. And then being brittle, it easily shatters. And something shatters in the being not in a helpful way, and something shatters in the anger, in what we're trying to stand up against or for, what we're trying to express and the point we're trying to make. Something shatters and there's a collapse, a collapse in the being. And there's no strength there.

So the collapse, because of the shattering, because of the brittleness, because of the non-availability of these areas and circuits and directions and possibilities in movement, gesture and voice. The connection with all that with black and white thinking, black and white viewing. So this is not, I think, obvious at first. Again, I would say in some cases, I think it's significant and important to be investigated. I certainly wouldn't insist this is the only way things work or it works like this for everyone—not at all—but to be investigated. This is the kind of thing we would never think to connect these aspects.

So there's a relationship here to everything that we're talking about. There is a relationship to the question which I've brought up, I think, several times, but recently—gosh, now I can't remember. It might have been in the talk about pain on Psyche's Orchard. But anyway, somewhere, a few places in the last while, I brought up this question, I have at least, about, for example, ritual practices.

And when is it necessary? We have this question in relation to the energy body and movement. We've had it before, long before, the questions about ritual. When is it necessary for, let's say, an image of ritual to be manifested and concretized in an actual ritual? So this whole question about movement, gesture, body, movement, gesture, voice, vocalization is connected with that. When is it necessary for an image to be manifested, concretized as an image, or if it's an image of dancing or moving or whatever it is to be manifest that way?

And then we can break that question down into two kind of temporal levels. So one is, when is it necessary for the sense and the possibility of soul-making in the moment? Do I open up more of a sense of

soul-making right now by actually concretizing a ritual gesture, manifesting it, or a movement in the body that's connected with the image? Or do I get more soul-making? Does more soul-making open if I don't, and I just let it brew in the image and in the energy body and in the soul resonances, and the physical body remains still?

But then there's a second temporal level. What about the possibility of soul-making in one's life, more long-term? So what is necessary to, if you like, open up, support the most soul-making right now, in this moment? And then what about in one's life and more long-term? Concretization, manifestation, or not. And it can work both ways. So it's not like there's one answer. It's a question. It's a living question. Again, back to the question of subtle soul discernment, receptivity, openness of being, inertia.

So, two temporalities to concern ourselves with. If we're talking about, let's take the example that this image comes. And right now, with this image, what is it that allows it to become more soul-making? Is it moving the body, or is it being still? Is it concretizing or not? And then the second, what is it that allows that image to engender and open and instigate more, you know, the fullness or a fuller soul-making in my life over the long term?

So it may not need concretization or expression, a reflection of the image in body or voice, but it will at least need a kind of refraction into dharma. The image needs to be refracted somehow into dharma. And what will that need? What will that need from movement, gesture, voice? And are they available for that? Are they open? Are the circuits working?

So there's lots of discernment, lots of questions here. And you know, sometimes the soul may want to express itself through movement, gesture, voice, but those are blocked. And they block so much—this relates to what I said earlier—that the person doesn't even feel the want. Those circuits are so cut, there's such an absence of electric flow there, if we use that analogy, that they don't even feel the soul wanting to express in that way, through movement, gesture, voice.

So maybe that if some of these exercises re-establish the circuits, reconnect those circuits, then we have an actual choice. Listening is possible. We will recognize a want. Then we can choose whether we can discern what's right and how, etc. Sometimes something is so cut that we don't even feel the soul's want. If the circuit is alive, we're more likely to be able to feel the soul's want, if there is one. And then we can make the choice. Then we can listen better.

So sometimes in all these kinds of openings, it's normal for a human being to have blocks, to have limits, to have areas of soul that are just not in soul yet, not alive yet, to have areas of unconsciousness. All this is very, very normal. Areas of limitation, areas where there's just barred entry, all that is very, very normal. So please understand that in context as well.

And sometimes what happens is the angels come, the daimones come, an image come, imaginal figures come and help you, help me with something that is not, that is a difficulty for me, that hasn't been alive,

that's been an impossibility. So it could be exactly these kinds of ranges of movement, gesture, voice that we've been talking about, these kinds of expression. The angels come and they help. An image comes, an imaginal figure comes. And so from the power of the image, given with the image, and through the way of relating to the image, I am helped to revitalize, open, and travel in that area of being, an area of life.

It may be other issues. It may be, you know, in the Ridhwan school, Catherine was telling me they have this thing, I think they call it impeccability.

And what they really mean is the capability and the capacity to really be steady and grounded and consistent—to follow through with your plans or what you said, to honor your word. If you said you would do something, to really do it. I think it's called impeccability. It's like one of their foundational areas.

So it may be, for instance, that this quality is not really present, or in some areas it's not there. And we are helped by the visitations of the angels and the demons, and the ministrations of the angels and the demons, and the encouragement and the prodding—and sometimes the tough love—of the angels, the demons, the imaginal figures. And then we're able to access that area; it opens to us, it comes alive, we're able to travel in that landscape, that territory, that soul territory, both in imaginal practice and in life.

Or as I said, it might be the range of bodily and vocal openings and expressions that we're talking about in these talks. And then they become available, we can use them, and that's wonderful. And it was from the grace of the angel, in a way. Also, of course, it needs me to—as always—relate, to assent, and to relate in certain ways that allow that image to become genuinely imaginal, so that it has its full soul power.

So sometimes things work that way around: from the angel, so to speak, by the grace of the angel, still needing our work. But other times it's the exercises themselves which will support soul-making at the two temporal levels that we talked about. The exercises will open the possibility of images that are impermanent, but that come and that feel and are soul-making and soulful in that time that they're around, and maybe whenever they visit after that. But these exercises may also support the longer term, the longer arc of manifestation and opening of soul in one's life—the refraction of the daimon, daimons in one's life, the duty to the images in one's life, the human being living one's image.

The capacity of the person to live one's image, to really live one's image, to embody it, to manifest, to refract. So sometimes we're helped by the angels and the angels open the territory. The angels reconnect the circuits. And sometimes we have to do this kind of more exercise work, and that opens the circuits, and then they're open for the angels. Our practice and our life is open for soul, for the images, for the angels, and for our human refracting of daimon, of angels—for our expressions and manifestations of soul.

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