

Dilemmas and Delineations: How did we get *here*?! (Part 3)

Eros Unfettered – Opening the Dharma of Desire

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As I've already said, what we mean by 'eros,' the way we are using that term, is actually woven in and related to and indissolubly bound up with and connected to a whole range of other terms that we're using with specific meanings to form a kind of larger conceptual framework. There's a whole web of relationships and implied meanings there, so we can't really unpack what we mean by 'eros' without beginning to say and include more of those terms, and say a little bit about those other notions, and a little bit about what the relationships are. But this whole edifice, this whole architecture, conceptual framework, is something we'll unfold gradually. There's quite a lot to it, in a way.

I want to begin doing that now. And just before I do, you know, just to say: I'm aware that I'm referring to what is now really quite a large body of work. I think about all the material on emptiness and dependent arising, and imaginal practice, and re-enchantment and all that – it's actually quite a large body of work together with this piece, this course on eros. So if someone who is coming from the Insight Meditation tradition or something like that were to just pick a talk at random and listen to that talk, they would probably be just baffled, puzzled, probably even maybe shocked, perhaps even outraged: "What is *this*? What is he talking about? What are they talking about? How on earth did we get *here*, these words 'soul,' 'eros,' 'divinity,' even the word 'God,' 'cosmopoesis' (whatever *that* means)? What on earth is he talking about, and how did he get there? This is really pretty far out. Is this Buddhism?"

Now. [laughs] I've touched on that last question before. It may be, in some respects, quite an interesting question. In other respects, it might not be interesting at all. What's more interesting about it to me is, why is a person asking such a question, and what assumptions and fantasies are operating for them? And in our language, what soul-styles can we approach this material with and its relationship to, let's say, more conventional interpretations of Dharma? I've talked about that before; I'm not going to repeat it here. But just to say: I would say this body of material needs listening to, studying, practising with – all that material around the emptiness, but certainly around the imaginal material, in series. In other words, it adds up. In that way, only then can a person kind of see and understand what is meant in these teachings.

But we'll also, hopefully, understand – if a person does that, listens, studies, ponders, and practises in series – that there is kind of, I would say, an almost inevitable or natural evolution of this material now. It evolved, if you like, naturally. The doors were presented one after another. The consequences, the avenues, were travelled in a kind of logical or inevitable order – one insight, one opening led to another, etc., all based on what we might call the 'phenomenological approach,' which is how I would base my approach to the Dharma. It's very, very simple, starting with very, very simple practices, including the ideas of mindfulness, but not based on the usual assumptions. This is what makes a phenomenological approach. It's not based on the usual assumptions, but based on just, what do I have as a human being? I have experience. I have what appears to me. 'Phenomena' means appearance. And just basing it on, "This is experienced. Now, what can I discover about experience?" And introducing

into that very quickly – one discovers, “I can look at it this way, and I can look at it that way. I can relate to it this way, that way,” so the ideas of ways of looking and fabrication eventually come out of that, because I see some ways of looking fabricate differently than others, [as] we touched on.

So all this unfolds. Very, very simple practices, just *not* based on the usual assumptions, just suspending them, opening them, relating to what actually is here – experience is here, appearance is here – without other assumptions. All this leads to other concepts, other ways of framing what’s happening, and out of that comes a freedom, and certain conceptual frameworks, or the availability to look in different ways and to conceive in different ways. If one doesn’t understand all that, and see it through practice, almost like stage by stage, probably a person won’t understand what we’re saying now in these teachings – probably; there are always exceptions, of course. Without that practice and without those understandings and those insights, there’s not going to be an understanding. So that’s one thing.

A second thing is, related, regarding these words like, for instance, ‘soul’ or ‘divinity’ or ‘God,’ this is interesting, why some people react to these words. Just to point out, everyone – unless you’re a real weirdo [laughs] – everyone uses the word self: I, you, self, etc. And everyone experiences selves. Everyone experiences selves – their own self or selves, and the selves of others. It’s just the same, or rather it’s similar with the notion of divinity. We’re talking about experience, okay? Just as ‘self’ is a word that we use, an experience, so is ‘divinity’ – or rather, ‘divinity’ is a whole range of experiences, a whole range of dimensions of experiences, if you like, that will become evident, that will appear in one’s experience, *if* we do not block, dismiss, or rule it out. In other words, if I’m closed to the very notion of it, just a priori absolutely no way, rule it out, and if I don’t open my practice in a certain way, I *won’t* have that experience, and then it will seem like, “What are you talking about?”, or “You’re talking about something you’re making up,” or “It’s not real,” etc.

So we use the word, and we’re referring to a whole range of experiences, just like self. And just like self, the experiences of divinity or soul and the ideas of it, we acknowledge just like self are historically and culturally contingent. The selves that you and I experience now and assume to be real, the kind of modernist self of Western civilization, was not in many ways at all similar to the self that the people that the Buddha was addressing 2,500 years ago in India would have experienced. A lot of what we take for granted, and the complexity, and the kinds of interiority, just didn’t exist for them. Same with medieval Christendom – very different. So just like self, experiences and ideas of soul or divinity are historically and culturally contingent, conditioned. We acknowledge that, absolutely.

If it seems to someone listening, if it seems like, “Okay, but one of those, the self, refers to a reality, and the others, like soul and divinity, are just metaphysical speculations. They’re unnecessary, they’re unreal, and they’re ungrounded,” well, such a bias or assumption may just be reflecting a kind of indoctrination or brainwashing, if you like. The assumptions there and the actual experience may be determined by just what is the current dominant *Weltanschauung*, world-view, of Western modernist society, culture. It’s not so much that a person saying that has any very deep insight or radical, cutting, innovative idea. Actually, they’re just adopting, indoctrinated by, the assumptions of the current dominant world-view, and their experience and their assumptions are determined primarily by that.

[10:42] But even more than that, again, just like the word ‘self’ and the notion of the self and the experience of the self, notions of soul, God, divinity, are empty in many other ways apart from just

being historically and culturally conditioned and contingent. There are many ways to reveal the emptiness of the self, and on many, many different levels. I've talked and written a lot about that. The same is true of soul, God, divinity: empty, and in many ways, and at many levels. Now, someone with a little bit of insight will say, or maybe a lot of insight will say, "I use the language 'self.' I use that term. But I know it's empty." And again, same regarding 'divinity' and 'soul' and 'God,' etc. We use the language, but we know it's empty. Someone with perhaps broader insight will also say something like, "Although it's ultimately empty, it's important to respect the self and to care for the self." Okay, so there's a psychological wisdom there that's quite important. But again, just the same regarding divinity and soul: although it's ultimately empty, it's important to respect the soul (what does that mean?), and to care for the soul (what does that mean?).

And we can press this a little further. If we were to ask someone, this hypothetical person who uses happily words like 'self,' or 'matter' (which is almost unavoidable, another unavoidable word), or 'life' (some people use that quite a lot: life this and life that), and if we were to ask someone, "What do you *mean* when you say 'self'? What is the self? And what is matter? What do you mean by 'matter'?", at first, they would just sort of point: "Well, I mean this, or I mean that, or I mean this here." [knocks on something] Or life – they might sweep their hands around the room or around the outside or whatever. But if you just said, "Yes, but what do you mean by that?", and you kept pushing this question, probing with the question, without a doubt, it would pretty quickly reveal just how vague the notions of self, certainly the notions of life, and even matter are; how full of assumptions, how often not well thought out, full of assumptions/presumptions that don't really bear much scrutiny, much probing, and that can be pretty quickly revealed to be without secure foundations. Even matter – you just have to know, well, maybe a fair amount about modern physics. It's like, "Matter? It's the most obvious thing," but at a certain point, hmm, what are we actually talking about here? And what, when we talk about it, are we assuming and presuming? And what is the basis for assuming that? Can we be absolutely secure in those assumptions? Or we find out that it's resting on a set of assumptions, or the definition itself – of self, of matter, of whatever it is – is full of contradictions.

All this applies equally to notions of divinity and soul. They're vague notions. They rest on other assumptions. Any assumptions, you push them deep enough, and you're going to come to something that you just have to assume without knowing it's an absolute truth – in other words, it has no secure foundations. And a lot of notions actually end up being kind of circular in the definition, as you'll see when we talk about soul, etc. And in fact, that's probably true about everything, that there's a kind of assumptionality and vagueness and kind of incoherence or circularity, self-contradictoriness, about everything – anything you might name or point to or use as a concept or experience.

Okay, so all that as a kind of precursor. And I'm also aware, of course, that, as I said, there's a lot of material here. There's a lot of material on this retreat, and then you add it to the other retreats, and the whole thing about emptiness and the imaginal – it's really quite a lot. And it's hard, you know. I appreciate it's hard to kind of keep it all in mind. Especially hard, I mean, if you're not practising with this material in a really exploratory way. And also a lot of these ideas are not necessarily always so simple or easy to understand. So I fully appreciate that.

And by now what's happened is, someone very often says, "What do you mean when you say X, or when you say Y, or when you say 'cosmopoesis'?" And I *know* that that person has heard me explain it

or unfold it at maybe even some length in other talks in the past, and yet still they're asking. So this is very normal, very understandable. Partly, what I want to do now in exploring this web is also to – hopefully it can function as somewhere between a kind of exploration of the whole web of ideas, and a glossary, a kind of glossary of terms, which is a pretty strange thing to try and do in a talk, in a recorded talk format, rather than a book, where you can just flip to that page and quickly look it up, but I'm hoping it will be helpful. I'm hoping you'll just remember this is the glossary talk, and I can just go there and find it, and it's about this time in or whatever. But it is pretty strange as an idea, so I hope it's helpful. I hope it's not too dry. Hopefully it will serve.

[17:33] So I made a list of twenty terms. It's also strange because each of these terms, I'm going to be pretty brief. That's the whole point, trying to be quite brief. But each of these terms refer to a wide range of experience and the things I've talked about at much more length, so it's not always easy to kind of sum them up very succinctly or as succinctly as possible. So somewhere between a very brief glossary, and a sort of looking at the relationships and filling it out a little bit. All right? So twenty terms.¹

(1) Number one is – actually, we just used it a minute or two ago – the **phenomenological approach**. 'Phenomena' in Greek (*phainómena*) means 'appearance,' 'that which appears.' Now, in my life, as I said, what I have is appearances. The assumption that this or that is underneath appearances, or it's really matter, or all appearances/perceptions come from the brain, these are all assumptions. What I have is appearances/phenomena. I use the word appearances, experiences, and perceptions interchangeably. So what I have is appearances, what I have is perceptions, what I have is experiences. That's what I have as a human being. I don't go then, in the phenomenological approach, and add the assumption that everything comes from the neurophysiology of the brain, and that's what gives rise to perceptions, etc. And I don't also come from a metaphysical perspective that first there is God or beingness or whatever or something like that. It's just there is appearances. Let's just relate to appearances and see what we can find out.

That's the phenomenological approach. Why it's so powerful is that, for me, it's a very powerful way into understanding emptiness and also the imaginal. One of the sort of proto-phenomenologists, if you like, William James, the psychologist and philosopher, for him, anything that arose in experience was worthy of a phenomenological approach. That includes images. That includes things that appear to be psychic phenomena, etc. But basically, whatever appears to me, I can relate to as a phenomenon and investigate it, and investigate what kinds of relationships, and how it works, how relationships function around that thing, whether it's an image or a worldly perception or whatever, of the different senses, etc., or an idea. All that is appearance – an idea, even, is appearance – and it's worthy of investigation. Of course, there are differences between those domains, kinds of appearance, but still. I'll just put this in now; it's something we'll come back to. What I think is if we go deeply enough and radically enough with this phenomenological approach, actually there are ways that it can end up opening what we might call metaphysical philosophy. But we'll come back to that. So first one's the phenomenological approach.

(2) The second one, and we've talked about this before: **ways of looking**. For me, this is another really fundamental, really powerful and pervasive concept, by which I mean not just looking with the eyes, certainly, but ways of sensing, ways of knowing, ways of perceiving. So it involves any senses.

But really it refers to what is the perspective that's being employed now, and included in that is the relationship with the object that I'm perceiving, whatever that is (internal, external, etc.). Am I, for example, grasping at it? Am I pushing it away? Am I seeing it as self or not-self, etc.? All these are different ways of looking. Wrapped up in that, always in the way of looking is the conceptual framework. So the whole kind of mishmash of conditioning factors in the perceiving makes the way of looking. And there's *always* a way of looking. Most of the time, unless you're really into this way of practising (and even then), the way of looking is not conscious. We're not actually conscious of everything that's involved in the way of looking, and most human beings have very little range or leeway in the ways of looking. In other words, they can just kind of, on a very gross level, shift the ways of looking a little bit. I would see Insight Meditation practice as the practice of a whole range of ways of looking, really developing that flexibility and that range of ways of looking in practice, in ways that really have a powerful effect. So that's number two, ways of looking.

(3) Related to that is number three, this whole idea of **fabrication**, because we start to see, as we play around with ways of looking in the phenomenological approach, that perceptions, appearances, experiences are fabricated more or less dependent on the way of looking. In other words, some ways of looking really seem to fabricate, if you like, more perception, more of a sense of self, a more solid sense of self, a more separate, a more contracted sense of self. Also with objects – more separate, solid, real-seeming, more oppressive, also; and, in fact, with the whole sense of the world and other things, such as time and even space, etc. So there's a spectrum of fabrication, and different ways of looking fabricate more or less, all the way to extremely gross and solid and oppressive, to much, much less fabricated, less fabricated, less fabricated, etc., down into not fabricating at all. What's fabricated there, as I said, is *dukkha*, is dis-ease and suffering, but also the sense of self, the sense of object, the sense of world, the sense of time – all of it. So the fabrication of perception, that's number three.

(4) Number four is the concept of **emptiness**. This really means that what we come to understand, one way or another, about these ideas of ways of looking, fabrication, coming out of the phenomenological approach, are one very powerful way of understanding emptiness. Emptiness means that no thing, nothing exists in a way that's inherent, has what they call inherent existence – in a way that's independent of the way of looking, independent of the mind that's looking at it. In other words, it's the way of looking that makes it a thing and that makes it seem like a separate, independently existing thing. Without the way of looking, and without being *fabricated* by the way of looking, there is not the appearance of that thing. So that's one way of understanding it. You can also do it analytically, and you find out the whole notion of things that seem so real, so solid, so independently existing, is actually incoherent, [that] things are actually unfindable. That's another way into understanding emptiness.

What is empty? Everything is empty, without question. So not just all selves and all things – and that means *any* notion of self, so even the self as process, not a real thing. It's just arising as a way of looking. It's a relative degree of fabrication. But awareness is empty too. Actually, even the notion of fabrication is empty too. In other words, it's not really real. It's a kind of construct that we see – there's actually a way of going deeper and deeper into the whole teaching of fabrication as a practice, and you find out that fabrication, too, is kind of incoherent. It cannot be a reality. Dependent origination, similarly, is empty – all those twelve links, or thirteen, or ten, or whatever system you're using. All of

them are lacking inherent existence. They don't refer to real units of existence or units of being or realities or entities or whatever. The Unfabricated actually also turns out to be empty, and the whole distinction then between what's unfabricated and fabricated, also illusory. Emptiness, as well, is also empty. So emptiness is a very radical, pervasive concept. Everything, without question, is empty. What we end up with then – we start with this notion of ways of looking, and we end up with this really radical, thorough insight that in the end there are only ways of looking. The ways of looking are empty, too, but all we have is a range of ways of looking, which we can expand. And those are not realities; those are ways of looking. Those ways of looking also don't inherently exist. But all we have, all we come to, the freedom that we come to, is there are just ways of looking. Something very beautiful, very radical, very profound in that insight, and extremely far-reaching.

So in a traditional Dharma approach, as I said, the idea of ways of looking, we channel that into the direction of: which are the ways of looking that bring more suffering, or lock suffering into place or whatever, and which are the ways of looking that ease suffering? The whole concept of ways of looking, in the sort of narrow Dharma sense, is tied up very much with the Four Noble Truths, with what leads to suffering and what leads to the ease of suffering. But in exploring ways of looking, we also see that there are other directions that don't have – or at least don't *obviously* have – much to do with suffering and the end of suffering that can open up. So a way of looking can open up, for example, soulmaking more or less, or cosmopoesis more or less. They *are* related to freedom and ending suffering, reducing suffering, but sometimes not in a very obvious way. Okay, so that's the fourth, emptiness.

(5) The fifth, the words **imaginal** and **image**. When I use the word image, I mean an imaginal image, okay? Which means definitely not just imaginary – i.e. just completely fictitious. It also doesn't have to be – we think 'image' has to be something visual; it doesn't. It can involve any of the senses, and quite unusual ways of knowing and ways of perceiving things. But it also refers to more than just the use of the imagination. Just using the imagination does not mean 'imaginal,' nor even if an image comes and it has a kind of mythic character – I don't know, dragons, and even Jesus or whatever – or some classic archetypal figure or something. It may not be imaginal. An image is an image for me, or imaginally functioning for me, it's imaginal for me, if, for me, at that time, it has a kind of unfathomability to it, a depth to it, just, for example, in the way that a person does. We would never, hopefully, say, "This person, my friend X, she means this to me," or "She is this." I mean, we might say that, but we always know that that never captures her entirely. There's something I can't get to the bottom of her. Why? Because she's a person. She's a person. There's something unfathomable there. I can't reduce her. If I do start reducing her, what's going to happen to my relationship with her? She's probably not going to stick around much.

But similarly with imaginal figures: I can't capture them. They have this unfathomability. There's something kind of beyond the reach of my grasp, that I can keep uncovering meanings and truths and dimensions to them, but I can't reduce them – or rather I'm *not* reducing, for them to be imaginal. I can't say, "This image is just a result of some random neurochemical reactions in my brain, or neurophysiological pathways being fired" or whatever, nor can I reduce it in the way of "I'm having this image, this image is coming, because it represents this from my childhood, or this factor of my mind" or something. So 'imaginal' means not reduced. There's a sense of irreducibility to them. It

might encompass all of that or acknowledge all of that is involved. The neurophysiological, of course it's involved. It might have some bearing (we'll talk about this; I think we did on the *Re-enchanting* retreat), what's the relationship with my personal history and this image. But not reducing the image to the personal history, to be a result of the personal history.

What is imaginal to me, an imaginal figure, has a kind of otherness and a kind of autonomy, okay? Just like a person, it's like, they're not part of me. I don't completely control them. You can hear, implicit in that is for something to be an image, it requires me to have a certain way of looking at it, because if I start to see it as, "No, no, no, this is just random neurochemistry or whatever. This dream that happened was just my brain randomly firing at night. That's what brains do," then I have a way of looking there that's not imaginal, and the image is resolved, or reduced, or I lose interest in it or whatever. It's no longer imaginal. So in the meaning of the word 'image,' it's not just an object. It includes the way of looking at that object, and (we'll come back to this) we're kind of granting it a certain autonomy. With that, because there's this unfathomability and they're not reducible, in time (and I'll come back to this) we sense a kind of, let's call it 'divinity' to the image. It's part of the dimensionality. This will keep finding more dimensions in this image, in the unfathomability of it.

All of this is meaningful, so that's part of what an image is. It's always meaningful in some way. It doesn't mean "it means X" or "it means Y"; 'meaningful' is a much fuller, less tightly circumscribed term. And always with the imaginal is some kind of sense of beauty and some kind of sense of sacredness. There may be quite a surprising sense of beauty. There's a breadth and diversity to the kinds of beauties that can open up, and the kinds of sense of beauty and the sense of sacredness that can open up through imaginal practice, in imaginal practice, as present there. Oftentimes, yeah, it's quite surprising. That's a feature of image and imaginal practice: beauty and sacredness.

Now, the imaginal and images – and I'll also use the word 'fantasies' almost interchangeably with 'images,' but maybe when it has a bit more of a narrative feel to it I'll use the word 'fantasies' – we don't just mean intrapsychic. These also relate to how we perceive the world. So images, fantasies come in, they pervade, they mix with, they saturate our perception of everything – of self, of other, of world, of being, of path, etc. They operate in our life. Sometimes people say, "Well, I don't get any images," meaning they don't get any intrapsychic images, sort of like I shut my eyes and nothing comes. But images are in our life. And I would say where there's love, where we love deeply, where something is really alive for us, where something is really important to us, where something is really meaningful to us, there image and fantasy are operating in our life, in relation to and around that thing, whatever that thing is – if it's Dharma, or practice, or a lover; it can be absolutely anything. Where there is love, meaningfulness, importance, aliveness, *there* there is image and fantasy.

Now, I'm going to throw in one more thing here in imaginal practice, which is that it involves also what I call seeing the image as an image, knowing it's an image. In other words, we're not taking this literally. If I have an image of – well, certainly if I have an image of having sex with someone, it doesn't mean I have to have sex with someone, or I'm going to have sex with them. It doesn't mean that at all. I don't have to take it literally. But actually *any* image, it might have an outflow into life, but often that outflow is – it's almost always *not* literal; it's always subtly kind of refracted or modulated in life in the way that it's expressed. Seeing image as image. It doesn't mean, if I have this image, that I'm picking up some kind of ESP, either, or whatever (although, of course, there's that possibility too). I'm

not going to go into that distinction on this course. Seeing image as image also means that the ideas and the concepts that are perhaps wrapped up with the image are not taken as truth claims. I'm not saying, "This is the reality," or "This is true" about whatever. Okay, so that was the fifth one, image and imaginal.

(6) The sixth one, very related, is **soulmaking**, which I used already. What's soulmaking? It's anything, any activity or way of looking or way of being, that gives rise to a sense of soulfulness. So we could use it in the way of meaning it's soulfulness-making; it's making the experience of soulfulness. And again, it could be anything. It could be anything, in relationship with anything at all. The way of being with it, the way of looking at it, the thing that I do with it or in relationship to it, gives rise to a sense of soulfulness. Again, this is very related to the definitions of 'imaginal,' but when there is soulfulness, there is a sense of importance, of deep importance. This thing is important to me. Strange as it might seem to someone else, this is important to me. It has a deep importance. It has a beauty to it.

There is love involved, and often very different kinds of love, a large range in the kind of expressions of love that are involved in soulfulness. Meaningfulness, resonances. So soulmaking is recognized through its resonances in the heart, in the emotionality, its resonances in terms of image. An image has resonance with other image, and an image itself is resonant with the energy body (which I'll come to in a little bit) and with ideas. Soulmaking also gives a sense of dimensionality. It involves image and fantasy, and also idea, what we're going to call 'logos'; all of that. So soulmaking means soulfulness-making, in the sense it makes that kind of gestalt. The gestalt of those kinds of experiences refers to a sense of soulfulness. But soulmaking can also mean making soul, making something called soul. So not just soulfulness as an adjective to describe a set of experiences, but also making something called soul. Okay. So the sixth term here is 'soulmaking.'

(7) The seventh term is indeed that word, **soul**. What does this mean? Here, again, I can use it in two ways. I can use 'soul' not in the sense of referring to an entity, but referring to a way of looking: soul is just a way of looking that gives rise to soulfulness, that gives rise to soulmaking. When I say 'soul,' I'm just referring to it as a way of looking. But I can also refer to soul as if it were an entity. We'll talk about it as an entity, an *empty* entity, going back to what we said earlier about self. We talk about self as if it's an entity, but it's not. It's empty, yet we still use the concept, and we feel it as an entity, etc., at times. Similarly, we can talk about soul as if it was an entity. What kind of entity? Well, it's that entity, that aspect of *citta*, if you like, that facet of *citta* or being, that which sees or senses in a soulmaking way. That's the entity of soul. It's that which sees in a soulmaking way, in what I meant in all that before – with image, with fantasy, with meaningfulness, with depth, with dimensionality and beauty and all that. That's soul. So soulmaking increases soul, it makes soul, in the sense that it reinforces, it strengthens, it widens and deepens that entity or that capacity or that tendency to see in a soulmaking way, to see in a way that gives rise to soulfulness, to see imaginally, and with meaningfulness and resonance, and depth and beauty, and all that. Soulmaking *builds* soul. It *makes* soul. Okay, so that's the seventh, the term 'soul.'

[42:41] (8) The eighth is the term **energy body**. It can sound like we're talking about some *thing*, some kind of New Age idea or esoteric idea. Really I'm referring to a mode of attending to the experience of body – a way of looking, again, if we go back to the phenomenological approach. The

energy body really refers to that: a way of attending to this space, actually a little bit bigger than what appears to be my physical body, and the feeling of that, the sense of that; yes, the image of it, but also the palpable sense of that field of vibration, texture, energy, etc. Really important to stress here: there is a real spectrum, there's a wide spectrum, in that experience, so that we can experience a very, very refined field of energy, very insubstantial, ethereal, and that's lovely and actually very important. Sometimes even *that* goes, and there's just a sense of space, which is really at the edge of what we might call energy body experience.

But at the other end, there's also just the sense of something really dense and earthy and solid and very substantial. We can feel the energy body there. So the energy body refers to that whole spectrum. And it means more than just what many people are familiar with from, say, mindfulness practice or more conventional kinds of or more common ways of teaching Insight Meditation practice – what can seem at times just like this pulsing or flickering field of sensations, or field of hot or cold or pressure, etc. Yes, that's a certain kind of, let's say, mode of attention or feeling of experience of the energy body, but it actually is much broader than that. There are ways of paying attention and experiences of energy body that are not like either that or the regular sort of solidity we feel. There's really a whole range there. That's energy body. That's the eighth.

(9) The ninth is **eros**, which we've already defined in a small way, and we're going to expand it and kind of make a bigger definition as we go along. So it's the desire – eros is a kind of desire. It's the wanting more contact, more connection, more touching, more experience of or to experience more of, to know more or to know more of, to penetrate more or to penetrate more of, or to open more and to open to more of, to have more intimacy with some object, some erotic object (either in everyday perception or in imaginal, intrapsychically). Note that this is multidimensional, multifaceted. We're not just talking about a mental faculty here – I'll come back to this, but some kind of *vitakka-vicāra* thing where you're just probing the object. I'll come back to that relationship. First of all, it's not just mental. It involves all the senses. And it's embodied, which doesn't mean that it needs to manifest in action. More importantly, and this is where the definition starts to get bigger, it involves and it pulls in and stimulates the imaginal and the ideational. So actually when we talk about eros, we're talking about something that includes the imaginal and the ideational in certain ways, in ways that expand them and moves towards soulmaking. So eros is the ninth term.

(10) And you can see eros is one kind of desire, if we use that word, **desire**, as the tenth term. And desire, we can maybe use it in a way that's more neutral, or as a more broad term, perhaps similar to the Pali word *chanda*. So desire would then include eros as a subset in the way that we've just described. When it does that, when the desire is of that kind, it's eros. But desire would also include craving and clinging and these kind of words we've used before, which I'll come to in a minute. But the tenth is just desire as kind of a broad term of which there are different kinds, and it's kind of a neutral term.

(11) That word, **craving**, is the eleventh. We'll come back to this more. I'm going to say craving is a kind of desire that does *not* lead to soulmaking. Actually, it leads to a kind of contraction. Soulmaking is an opening movement, and craving brings contraction. As I said, you can actually feel that in the being, in the body, in the energy body, in the mind, and in lots of other ways, which we'll go into. Craving brings *dukkha*, in the way that we might use it, okay? So to distinguish eros and craving, different kinds of desire. But craving is the eleventh term.

(12) Maybe if I use the term **clinging** as the twelfth term, what I'm really referring to is that whole spectrum that I talked about in the first few talks, where you're really talking about something that can be very, very gross, gripping, like, "Don't leave me! I need you!", that kind of clinging, to something really, really subtle, talking about actually *avijjā*, just the belief, the unconscious assumption, that this thing (whatever this thing is, this emotion, this fingernail, this foot) is me or mine, unconsciously, without even thinking about it, or even the *avijjā* that this thing (whatever this thing is, this moment of *vedanā* or this lamp in front of me) has inherent existence. That *avijjā* is a very subtle level of clinging. It's wrapped up in attention, because the mind needs to cling in a very subtle way to actually perceive anything. But clinging, we might use it to refer to that whole spectrum in that broader sense. Okay, so that's the twelfth term, clinging.

[50:09] (13) The thirteenth term is ... I have to apologize here; I've used it already, **libido**, and I've already used it inconsistently, so apologies. [laughs] In a way, it's because it's not, for me – at least not yet – that important a term. So apologies, and just to note I have been inconsistent. Sometimes I might use it in a way that's almost equivalent to the way I'm using *eros*, and I think that's the way James Hillman likes to use it. Sometimes I might use it that way. I'm also thinking about using it to mean more something like libido as the embodied, directed, intentional flow of life force into any area or domain. So that might be a stream of creativity, or work, or a relationship, or building something, or whatever. It might be a stream. It might be a trickle. It might be a torrent.

In a way, it refers to psychic energy, and the way that can be employed in different ways. I think that's equivalent to how Jung used the term, but I also read something recently where he sort of said that, and then said something else: "But I don't mean it like that." But he didn't really explain the alternative, and I couldn't find anything else, so I'm not sure how he uses it. But it is a term that people use. For Freud, I think it was just the pleasure principle, in a way, or the instinct that came out of the id, the sort of pool of animalistic instincts, if you like, and the force, often guided by the pleasure principle and maybe other things, and that's the libido. Sometimes Freud referred to it that way. For other people, it literally means sexual urge or desire. And there's also, some of you will know (I'm going to return to this) a psychoanalyst – I think he was very active in the fifties and sixties, possibly – Scottish, called Fairbairn. He used libido in a way that sounds, at first, similar to the way we're using *eros*: a desire to connect. It sounds similar, but actually I'm going to point out some differences later on in the retreat. So libido, people use it in very different ways. Sorry I've already been sloppy and inconsistent there. All I can say is maybe the sloppiness and fluidity in the way I'm using it just reflects its etymology, which I've already said: libido, libation, liquid. This is the etymology. It's liquidy. So I'm quite fluid in my definitions. That's a pretty lame excuse! But I don't think we'll be using it much anyway. Anyway, apologies. That's the thirteenth term.

(14) The fourteenth term is **psyche**. One meaning of psyche, in the way that I use it, is just really the totality of the *citta*, the psyche. In other words, the mind, but not reduced to the thinking mind; just the whole totality of *citta*. But another kind of inflection of the meaning means especially 'soul,' so using it equivalently with 'soul,' in the way that I defined 'soul' earlier in this talk, as the sort of organ of imaginal perception. So psyche as the organ of imaginal perception. But there's a second way that I use it sometimes, and by 'psyche' I mean the totality of imaginal perceptions. Jung actually says psyche is image. I'm using it sometimes as the totality of the *citta*; more often as the equivalent with soul, the

organ of imaginal perception; but quite a few times I will use it as the totality of imaginal perceptions, so it's almost interchangeable with 'image.'

(15) Logos. So there's another Greek word – your eros, psyche, logos. Logos, I'm using that to refer to a concept or an idea, or a whole conceptual framework. In other words, what we're elaborating here is a kind of conceptual framework, but *any* concept or *any* idea or *any* conceptual framework is a logos. For example, when I say 'the autonomy of the imaginal figure,' as if they have a degree of being independent of me, that's a concept. It's an idea. It's a logos that's operating in imaginal practice – even at the same time as we know it's a dependent arising, which is another logos. So you can have mixtures of concepts operating at any time. If I reduce the imaginal figure to, let's say, it's the product of random neuronal firings, or conditioned neuronal firings, or it's expressing something from my childhood, or it's expressing an aspect of my being, this kind of reduction of the imaginal figure – *any* kind of reduction – involves a logos in operation.

Any idea of causality (that *this* is a result of *that* in the past, for instance) is also a logos, a concept operating. Another alternative would be what's called *telos*, another Greek word. You're learning a lot of Greek on this retreat! *Telos* refers to almost like causality from the future. I've talked about this, I think, on the last retreat.² That's a different logos, a different concept operating: that the future, something, so to speak, from the future, beckons us and shapes the present. Very different idea, very different logos. If we talk about the divinity of eros (which is something we'll come back to), that's a logos. Neuroscience as a whole is a whole conceptual framework, is a whole logos. The idea that consciousness arises from matter as an epiphenomenon of matter, of neurology, that's a logos. Actually, evolution itself is a whole conceptual framework, is a logos.

So what I want to say is that there's always a conception, there's always a logos operating in the mind – always, always, always, except during an experience of the Unfabricated, when there's a collapse of conceptuality. By 'conceptuality' and 'logos,' I include thought structures and thoughts, but it goes way deeper than that. There's conceptuality operating even when there's no thought whatsoever. And oftentimes, the concepts operating are just assumed, not really checked out, and oftentimes they're operating – most of the time they're operating without us really being conscious of what they are. But when I talk about logos, because it's wrapped up in perception, I'm not talking about something abstract. We *live* a logos, or we live logoi. We live different ideas. Different concepts shape how we live, they inform how we live, but more fundamentally, they shape our way of looking. They're part of, they're included in, the way we look at everything, and therefore what we perceive, what appears to us. So they have massive influence. I'm not talking about abstract ideas here. So the fifteenth is logos.

(16) The sixteenth is what I'm going to call the **eros-psyche-logos dynamic**, or the **soulmaking dynamic**. Those are interchangeable terms. Now, I'm going to devote quite a lot of time to that on this retreat, but what it really means is that the 'more,' the wanting more that we talked about with eros – more connection, more opening, opening to more of the erotic object, penetrating more, to know more, to experience more – this wanting more, that push there, if you like, or wish to open more to the erotic object, that starts bringing in, inseminating, influencing, expanding the psyche in relation to that object (in other words, the imaginal perception of that object) so more dimensionality is created and discovered in that object. In my erotic connection with my lover or whatever it is, I start to see in her, I start to see in him, I start to see more, more dimensions. They're not just this person that I can put a

box around. They're even more than just a human being, or rather the notion of humanity starts to open and have other dimensions.

So there's an expansion of the psyche. They become richer, more complicated, deeper, wider. There's an expansion of psyche, of image, and also of logos. In other words, my whole idea of who they are, my idea then of what a human being is and what soul is, that gets expanded as well. This is really, really important. When it gets expanded, they are then more yummy to me, more interesting, more attractive. It increases the eros there. And so there's a kind of self-feeding, self-generating, ongoing fertilization, mutual fertilization of eros, psyche, logos; mutual widening, deepening, enriching, complicating, adding dimensionality, etc., that goes on. I'm going to say much, much more about that. But when I refer to the eros-psyche-logos dynamic – or I will also use the word soulmaking dynamic for the same thing – that's that process. We have a lot to say about that. That's very, very fundamental, I would say, and understanding that. A very central concept. Okay. That's number sixteen, the eros-psyche-logos dynamic.

(17) Number seventeen is this term **cosmopoesis**. So this is something, I would say, that we start to notice in imaginal practice, that as we go into imaginal practice we start to see that it begins to spill over. Even if I'm practising with my eyes shut, I open my eyes after I've been working deeply with mindfulness and sensitivity with this imaginal figure, I open my eyes and there's a kind of spilling over to the perception of the world, to the world of perception, so that something of the image, and something particularly of the *divinity* of the image, starts to pervade my sense of the cosmos that I feel myself to be part of. So this is something we notice. It's also an instance of that whole eros-psyche-logos expanding dynamic that I was just referring to. It's starts to expand beyond just the object, but also to other objects and to the world.

There are infinite possibilities for cosmopoesis. More typical ones involve a kind of universal cosmopoesis, in the sense that – for example, meditating a lot on *mettā*, eventually, at some point, a meditator will have the experience that the world is love, the cosmos is shot through with love. Now, you explain that to someone on the high street, and they'll say, "What are you talking about?" It's a perception of the cosmos, it's a mystical perception, but it's characterized by universality: all things in the world are of the same substance, and the substance is love. It could be awareness. If you practice a lot with a vastness of awareness and other related practices, you get a similar thing. The cosmopoesis there is also universal: everything is awareness, everything is the play of awareness, etc.

But then there are also (rarer in our circles, and more interesting for that very reason) particular cosmopoeses. So this particular erotic-imaginal³ figure that I'm working with, sensitively and mindfully in practice, then I get up and walk around and look at the world around me, and I notice that the particularities of that figure that I was opening to and discovering and sensitive to in the practice, they come to characterize the cosmopoesis. The whole world becomes this particular, or a manifestation of, or flavoured with this particular imaginal figure and his/her/its characteristics, its particularities. Cosmopoesis – note that word, *-poesis*, in contrast to *-logy*. *Cosmology* is a word that people know. 'Cosmology' means the study of the science of the universe. So we go and we hear about Big Bangs and all that stuff, which is – I love it; it's absolutely fascinating to me. The difference between 'cosmology' and 'cosmopoesis' is the absence of a truth claim that goes with the cosmopoesis. So we're recognizing that this is a creation of the way of looking, or a better word is 'participation.'

We're participating in something. The way of looking, the *citta*, the soul, is participating in the cosmos. So there's a participatory aspect of a kind of cosmopoesis, of the reality-creating. And also, cosmopoesis – we're talking about poetic truths, if you like, here, which is something I've talked about before, which is different than the usual notion of scientific truth. This, also, I've talked about before; there's a whole – you know, really going into the philosophy of science and what's true and what's a model, etc., and all that. And also to point out that when I use the words – I was contrasting *poiesis* and *logos*, but actually when I use the word 'logos' in the way we're using it, we're not making a truth claim, other than that everything is empty, and even *that*, actually, you let go of at a certain point. A logos is just a concept that we can pick up, or a conceptual framework we can pick up, without insisting or even believing it as true. Okay? But cosmopoesis is the seventeenth one.

[1:06:53] **(18)** The eighteenth term is **theophany**. 'Theophany' literally means 'an appearance of the divine.' The last five talks of the retreat *Path of the Imaginal* had the title of something like "A Sacred Universe: Insight, Theophany, Cosmopoesis."⁴ We dealt with it a lot there, and in a way, the whole of the *Re-enchanting the Cosmos* retreat had to do with cosmopoesis and theophany. But theophany would refer to maybe when a particular thing or object becomes a particular face of the divine, or it becomes a face of the divine. Again, it can be universal, but more I'm interested in the particular. It really could be anything: this tree, or this person, or this body, or whatever, becomes a particular face of the divine, or this imaginal figure is a particular theophany. It's a face of God, if you like, a face of the divine. That's the eighteenth term, theophany.

(19) The nineteenth term is **divinity**. And again, this is something that we notice. I'm using it very broadly, so I'm actually not defining. But, if you like, it refers to a kind of unfathomability, mystery, otherness, including of transcendence – all of that. But actually, the notions are really quite wide, of what that might involve. It's something I'd rather leave it to your experience, and just say: notice, with images, as you work with them, when they become really alive, that they have this kind of numinous quality. It's something we notice, rather than we define it. So you'll notice in imaginal practice that, more and more with an image, when you get used to it, it has this kind of quality of divinity to it. It's part of its otherness.

Just to say a little bit about that word. You know, standard Insight Meditation will bring experiences of divinity of certain kinds – a whole range, actually. Various experiences of divinity, mystical experiences, I would say would be inevitable for meditators meditating with dedication and consistently with Insight Meditation techniques and approaches, etc. For example, that big awareness thing, everything is awareness, or everything is love – it really *feels* like there is a divinity to that love. The cosmos is shot through with a divine love. This awareness has somehow the sense [of divinity]. People often talk, though they never have before, they start talking in theistic terms, almost surprising to themselves, when those kinds of very common experiences happen. I would say certain kinds of practices, I can put people in a room, get them to do these practices, and it's just a matter of time until these very standard experiences of divinity open up, and people almost inevitably start using that language.

So the question is, if these experiences open up, even in standard Insight Meditation, what is the attitude to these experiences? What's the relationship to them? How are we interpreting them? How are we conceptualizing them? A person might be told, or might hear, or might think, "Well, all experiences

are impermanent. Don't think about them. Don't get attached to them. Don't try and repeat them." We touched on this earlier. That's useful sometimes. *Sometimes* that's useful, to let go when it's too tight, the kind of gripping, the attachment. But mostly it's not that helpful as a kind of attitude or a way of relating to these kind of experiences. It's not quite intelligent enough. It won't open things out in a way that is that beneficial.

Insight Meditation, standard Insight Meditation techniques, conceptions, approaches, the conceptions underlying Insight Meditation, *will* lead, with a certain amount of dedication and kind of good practice (if you can say 'good'), to experiences that the Buddha did not ignore. He did not say in relation to them, "Oh, just don't try and repeat them. Let's not go there. Don't get attached," etc. He gave them names. He taught the monks to repeat them, etc. These were not something he just brushed off. These were not experiences he just brushed off. And as the Buddhадharma evolved after the Buddha died, in different streams of the tradition – the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna – there was an even greater exploration and a range of experience that was opening up from people's meditative practice, and an even more careful and comprehensive and manifold sort of categorization of those range of experiences involving different senses of divinity.

So when we say 'divinity,' I'm leaving it quite broad, but really talking about a whole range of experiences there. Again, some may be universal in character and impersonal in character, and some may be very particular, and some are related to particularities and theophanies, etc., and some will be personal, a personal god, an imaginal figure as a personal god and not an impersonal deity. We'll come back to this. So that's the nineteenth, divinity.

(20) And the last one that I may use is **Buddha-nature**. In the Buddhist tradition, this is a term that has a wide range of usage and arguments and all kinds of stuff. Some traditions use it in quite a narrow way: it just actually is your capacity to become fully enlightened, to become a Buddha, usually over many lifetimes, just by virtue of the fact that the mind, and the factors of the mind, and the contents of the mind are impermanent. So although there's ignorance right now, ignorance is impermanent. In other words, with the right training, you could change it. It's not fixed. It's not a fixed thing. And similarly with craving and the rest of it that gets in the way, or rather whose absence qualifies enlightenment.

In some meanings of the word Buddha-nature, it just refers to that. It's just your kind of unavoidable, no matter what you think of yourself, or where you are actually at in terms of your (quote) 'spiritual development,' there is always and undestroyably the possibility of becoming a Buddha. That's one usage. Sometimes, in more popular usage nowadays, it just kind of refers to your innate goodness. So if you think you're a mean person, and you see lots of not-so-nice stuff, then it's just a kind of way of saying that in you, at your core, is something bright and luminous and good, inherently good, inherently loving. If I use the term, I probably use it as just an alternative to the word God, in fact, or divinity, which I'm using in a much more broad way, just because oftentimes the words God or divinity really rub people the wrong way, and especially some Buddhists. So we can use it, Buddha-nature, but in a different way than just that possibility. I'm actually talking about something that's divine. And again, it has a range of meanings.

Perhaps the most sort of full-on meaning, if you like, is from the Shentong tradition in the Tibetan tradition. Actually, it's a tradition that goes back to Mahāyāna Indian Buddhism. In that tradition, Buddha-nature is interchangeable with words like *dharmakāya*, and actually even the word emptiness,

which is used differently when they use it in that tradition from the way I'm using it. So Buddha-nature, *dharmakāya*, emptiness, the Absolute, and other words (there are quite a few words that are used interchangeably), means something like the cosmic awareness that is inherently in me and in you and in everything, that knows the emptiness of all things, is not separate (as separating subjects and objects). In that sense, it's non-dual. It refers, then, to the knowing – which is also empty; this knowing awareness is empty in itself – but the knowing *and* the appearances *and* their emptiness. All that, known in a kind of non-dual way. In other words, it includes the whole cosmos as this kind of field of empty awareness knowing all things and also the emptiness of all things. So everything is Buddha-nature, everything has Buddha-nature, everything is Buddha-nature, everything is *dharmakāya* in that logos, in that experience.

Also, even stranger – to some Buddhists, this will sound strange – is that this *dharmakāya* or this Buddha-nature can act. So this cosmic Buddha-nature can act in the world and manifest different appearances or different qualities for an individual, or in an individual, dependent on what that individual needs for their well-being and their deeper journey, so that there's a kind of, if you like, intelligence – something akin to the World Soul – there's a kind of intelligence or divine activity that's operating in and through and as Buddha-nature, as well as that awareness and its inseparability from emptiness, from appearances, etc.

Phew. Okay. So there are twenty terms in a kind of glossary.

¹ Editor's note: please see the beginning of Part 2 of this talk for more information on the caveats of definitions. Rob wishes to encourage steering a middle course between, on the one hand, the illusion of comfort one might get from having precise definitions, and on the other hand, a too-quick dismissal of 'conceptuality' and definitions that are too loose – so loose that they let in too much, and the power of the idea is lost. This is tricky, and particularly for beginners, who, in the sea of new ideas and practices that they are being exposed to, might understandably want 'textbook'-like definitions to hold on to, but which may then become rigid, etc. In Soulmaking Dharma, all concepts, as well as images, need to have 'soft and elastic edges.'

² E.g. Rob Burbea, "The Gift and the Artifice of Self (Part 2)" (1 Aug. 2016), <https://dharmaseed.org/teacher/210/talk/37020/>, accessed 28 July 2020.

³ Editor's note: since the *authentic* imaginal will necessarily include eros, the term 'erotic-imaginal' is wholly interchangeable with 'imaginal'; it's not a new or different thing. Conversely, if eros is allowed to do its thing and is not blocked, it will elicit and provoke imaginal images. So the two *naturally* will be intertwined and found together.

⁴ Rob Burbea, "A Sacred Universe: Insight, Theophany, Cosmopoesis" [Parts 1–5] (12 and 13 Aug. 2015), <https://dharmaseed.org/teacher/210/?search=a+sacred+universe>, accessed 28 July 2020.