

The Way of Image
Four Circles, Four Parables of Stone and Light
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Okay, good evening, everyone, and welcome to this series of talks. I want to try and cover certain areas in this series. Quite challenging conditions at the moment and situation, so let's see what's possible. But I hope in this series, after a bit of an introduction this evening, to go into a little bit more, with a bit more subtlety and refinement, certain aspects or areas of the whole skill and art or alchemy of imaginal practice, sensing with soul. I want to hopefully focus in on the whole teaching of the elements of the imaginal, the nodes of the lattice, particular elements, and say a bit more about some of them. Perhaps if there's opportunity to say a few things about soulmaking dyad practice, practising in dyads, in twos. Maybe something about ritual, we'll see. Hopefully to address again, go into more a little bit of the philosophical sort of underpinnings, the metaphysics, the ontology, the epistemology that are involved and necessary, if you like, as a basis, or to clear enough space for Soulmaking Dharma.

Then, also, perhaps some reflections on the Dharma itself, meaning the tradition, and our relationship with tradition, and the history of that tradition, and how Soulmaking Dharma places itself or might be placed in relation to that tradition. And lastly, hopefully, something about ethics, and to open up that area in relation to soul. So let's see what's possible. Tonight, as I said, is basically an introduction. In a way, most of the principles I will talk about tonight are things you will have hopefully already heard, but they bear repeating, I think. Some of the examples may be new. But just by way of sort of getting us going, placing us, situating ourselves again in the territory.

If we talk about the art or the alchemy of imaginal practice, of sensing with soul, you know, there's a lot involved in that. Actually it presupposes, in a way, or at least it involves, everything that we bring or we learn in, if you like, regular Dharma or mainstream Dharma. And also everything we have to deal with as part of our Dharma practice is not outside of the sort of constituents of soulmaking practice. So just like a person may be attracted to, say, regular Dharma, and come on retreat, for example, and be there, and practise out of a deep attraction to the Unfabricated – may have heard something or read something, maybe not even using that language, but there's this pull, and that's the reason that this particular person is practising; that's the main pull in their soul, if you like.

And what do they find when they come on retreat and practise sincerely and wholeheartedly? They find they have to deal with, meet, and work with, on route to this realization and opening that they are longing for and enticed by, on route to that they have to deal with, meet with, and work with pain in the knee, monkey mind, their mother, all the psychological patterns and the relational patterns. All that stuff comes up, and it can't just be bypassed and avoided. It's, in a way, an integral part of the path. And so very similarly with Soulmaking Dharma, we may have heard something about images, or someone tells us, or something attracts us, we've tasted a little bit already and got excited and fallen in love with it even, but we still meet all these other kind of seemingly more mundane obstacles, difficulties, challenges, issues, etc., areas of practice that need attention and care and exploration.

So all this is, in a way, when we talk about what's involved in the art and the alchemy of imaginal practice/sensing with soul, we're actually including all that. Recently we taught this retreat at Gaia House, *Roots into the Ground of Soul*, and Catherine and I were talking a little bit beforehand, because we'd had another retreat called *Foundations of a Soulmaking Dharma*, I think the year before, and what's the difference between *foundations* and *roots*? It's not that important, but if you think about a foundation of a building, it's something that's static. It doesn't grow. It's not organic. It doesn't itself provide nourishment. It's just there as a basis. It's basic to allowing structure and stability to whatever you want to build on top of that. So we can talk about various foundations of Soulmaking Dharma, you know – energy body awareness, basic mindfulness, certain insight practices, *mettā*, *samatha*, the ability to kind of calm and gather the mind in well-being. All these are foundations – a certain skill with the emotions.

Many of these, and even some of those kind of difficult issues that I talked about – certainly one's mother, or even monkey mind, or one's psychological patterns, one's relational patterns, one's bodily difficulties – all of these, too, can become roots. And a root is something that's organic. In other words, it grows. It's not a fixed, once-and-for-all structural thing. It grows and changes. A root, if you think about the roots of a tree, they grow, they change, they provide nourishment, and they're actually themselves part of the whole living structure. So it's not necessarily, when we talk about foundations or basics of Soulmaking Dharma, “You need this, and *then* you can do the Soulmaking Dharma,” but all those elements, or most of those elements that seem like foundations, can then become themselves ensouled. We'll touch on some of these in different examples.

It's one thing to be able to be aware of your emotions, to feel them in the body, to have some skill with them. All that's great, and really indispensable, and we could say those are foundations. And at a certain point, if the soulmaking practice is going and blossoming and enriching itself and filling out and exploring, those very aspects of emotional life, of the heart life, become roots. In other words, they become ensouled. The whole way we relate to and conceive of and sense and work with our emotions and our emotional life and how that plays out *itself* becomes sensed with soul. Our emotions can become imaginal, in the sense that they become images, they become erotic objects for us, if you like.

So all this is involved. Some of it we're going to touch on in a little bit more detail as we go through these talks, hopefully. I've said this before: there's a lot involved in this, what we're calling the art and the alchemy of imaginal practice and of sensing with soul. Sometimes, I think for everyone, actually, it's worth checking: just where am I with all these foundations? I've spelled them out before, you know – the energy body, skill and awareness with the energy body, skill and awareness with the emotions, mindfulness, *mettā*, *samatha* and all this, things like that, relational skills, even just emotional capacity, if we talk about emotional skill. Many things are kind of foundational. It's worth checking, or periodically reviewing and asking oneself, “Where am I with all that? How solid are my foundations? Which ones are a little bit shaky, or actually not even there – that brick is missing in the structural foundation?” Because it *does* demand a lot, these practices that we're talking about. The whole Soulmaking Dharma does demand a lot. It asks a lot. We might hear things and kind of be attracted, but it won't really get off the ground unless many of these pieces are there. [11:10] So awareness or realization that, as we grow in practice, these very foundations can themselves become transformed, can grow, ferment like rice, like bread, or something with yeast in it, and become fuller,

richer, more multidimensional, more beautiful, all of that, as they become ensouled and drawn into the soulmaking practices.

Okay. So I said tonight, in this talk, it's really just an introduction, but there are some things that bear repeating and kind of reminding ourselves of. So it's worth taking the time to do that. We use a lot of words, some of which are familiar-sounding but used in a different way, and some will be very unfamiliar-sounding to many people. But even words that are becoming – there's somewhat of a renaissance of the use of the word 'soul,' for example, or 'imaginal,' or 'eros,' words we use a lot, and I think it's really important to recognize that we are using those words, words we share in common with other traditions, certain other traditions, but we're using them in very particular ways. And being clear about those delineations and definitions is, I think, really important, so that things, certain directions, open up that wouldn't otherwise open up.

Some of these words, like 'image' or 'imaginal,' in the way that *we're* using it, it's hard to sum up what that is succinctly. Even eros, we could give a little formula, but it's something that needs, yes, a careful definition, but also then the living of it, and the noticing of it, and the recognizing of it, and the growing into it, and it growing in us. When we say 'soul,' we could give a short definition, a succinct definition of soul, which I'll do in a minute, but also to say: with any definition we give, or a concept we use, that there's a sort of dance on a razor's edge between precision and clarity and differentiation from other closely related concepts or other usages of the same word in different traditions. So there's that on the one hand, this need for clarity, precision, differentiation. And on the other hand, the concepts and the words we use need to be able, themselves, to grow. So we don't want to pin something down, conceptually or by definition, in a way that's so tight that it then gets restricted and cannot be organic.

So a word like 'soul' has to retain a little bit of (A) space to grow, and (B) kind of fuzziness, what we call soft and elastic edges. So that's an element of the imaginal, one of the nodes, you'll recognize, but it also applies to the concepts that we use as well. So there's this dance on the razor's edge between precision, clarity, differentiation on one hand, and let's call it mystery, an organic mystery, perhaps, on the other hand. Having said that, we could give a definition of what *we* mean by 'soul' as something like the following: soul is that which – we say *looks*, but really *senses* – that which senses in ways that are soulmaking, or that increase soulmaking. So soul is that which senses in ways that feel soulmaking. And again, we'd have to explain what does 'soulmaking' mean; we've talked about that before, the resonances, the depths, the dimensionality, etc., all that. So soul, we're using that word loosely to mean that which looks or senses in ways that support and deepen and open and increase the sense of soulmaking. *And* it's that which *wants* to look in these ways, wants to sense in these ways.

So axiomatic to our whole paradigm is that the soul loves soulmaking, the soul wants soulmaking, okay? When we talk about *soulmaking*, it's that this organ, it's an organ of perception, of sensing in the ways that are soulmaking, and it's also an organ of desire that *wants* that. So we're including sensitivities and also desire and eros as part of this organ that we're calling 'soul.' It's an organ of perception, and an organ of desire. That's a sort of fairly succinct definition, but it leaves quite a lot of room for growth, for different ideas and vantage points and angles on it. For example, we can definitely conceive of *my* soul, that in *me*, if you like, that organ in me which senses in ways that open up soulmaking, and that *wants* to sense in those ways. Or we can talk about *the* soul, if you like. We could

talk about a World Soul or a cosmic soul that's operating in me or through me. There are different logoi, different ideas about, "Whose soul is it? What's actually happening here?"

Or, sometimes, again, just to touch on dyad practice (and you might have experienced this, either with practising with another, with a dyad, or in a group that's soulmaking), that actually there feels to be a kind of, if you like, soul of the dyad, and it's both independent and dependent of the two people that make up that dyad, or the people that make up that group. And this dyadic soul, if you like, is kind of a third – there's me, and this person that I'm in the dyad with, and there's a third that seems it kind of encompasses us, but it's sort of separate, and sort of includes us, and we sort of include it. But *that's* where the soul is, and again, we, perhaps, as members of the dyad, are constituent parts of that, or whatever. So there are different logoi, for example, that we can bring to bear on how we're conceiving of soul at any time, and this will either be opened up through practice, through experience, and also the different logoi as we take them for a spin a little bit, hold them, entertain them lightly. They also *allow* different kinds of experience to open up. As always, there's a very intimate relationship between perception/experience and conception. In this case, I'm just drawing attention to how they influence each other: perceptions influences conception, conception influences perception. Actually the intimacy is even deeper than that.

And so we talk about soul, we talk about images. I'm going to talk about images tonight a little bit, but I'm not going to attempt some kind of succinct definition there – just actually a few reminders of what we mean when we say 'imaginal.' We introduced the term 'sensing with soul' as a sort of equivalent term or interchangeable term, but one reminds us more of the possibilities that images are not necessarily just intrapsychic, something I have happen with my eyes closed or some completely private object. So I could be looking at this lamp, or this desk, or this book, or whatever it is, or my body, something that other people would agree is there in a socially agreed-upon perception, but the way that I'm seeing it, I'm sensing it with soul. It has dimensionality, it has meaningfulness, it has beauty, there's eros towards it, there are all those other elements of the imaginal. So when we say 'image,' we mean intrapsychic but also extrapsychic, if you like – 'sensing with soul,' and the word 'imaginal,' both of them encompassing all of that, using them interchangeably. But just the phrase sensing with soul as a reminder that we're not just talking about private intrapsychic images; we're also talking about perceptions of commonly agreed-upon things, objects, situations in the world which are sensed with soul, sensed in a soulmaking way.

I'll leave aside trying to define eros for now. I've done plenty of that in the past. And there are a whole bunch of other terms, but I think tonight we just want to touch on image and imaginal. And just to say, Soulmaking Dharma also includes, as we said, much that isn't obviously just image – all kinds of other aspects around that or that create a platform, a basis to allow that, etc. And soulmaking, in a way, also happens any time the mind or the heart, the experience, expands its frontiers in ways that feel meaningful and enriching and deepening. Some of those might not be through images or sensing with soul.

Again, just some reminders, but I think they're somehow worthwhile reminders. When we talk about image, mostly I use the word 'image' to mean 'imaginal image,' but I'll qualify that in a second. When we talk about imaginal practice, despite some of the similarities, we want to really delineate it from shamanism, for example, and from such explorations as, for example, energy healing, or

extrasensory perception. There are overlaps here. So the territory is not that cut and dried. But I really feel that it's worth kind of carving out a very specific area that we're calling imaginal practice, in differentiation from – despite some of the overlaps – some of these other areas, because imaginal practice is quite rare, and it's rarer than, I suppose, those other areas, and it's more likely that, if we mix these areas of exploration up, it's likely that the imaginal will be the first one that's lost, the first one that's kind of diluted, and its power and its potential to open up certain doorways and directions gets lost, because it's just confused with other idioms and traditions and explorations.

So despite some of the similarities and some of the overlap – and I find it very interesting, some of these other areas, certainly, but I just feel I have a duty to make clear what we mean by this particular area called imaginal practice, in contradistinction to some of these others. So we're not talking about channelling. Imaginal practice is not channelling. It's not shamanism. It's not energy healing. It's not ESP. It's not seeing ghosts. It's not, either, quite equatable with Buddhist tantra. Again, lots of similarities, lots of overlap, but not the same thing. So not saying this imaginal paradigm, the paradigm of the imaginal and soulmaking and that whole path, it's not better or worse – I've said all this before; I'm just repeating. It's not necessarily more or less advanced or anything like that. But it's different, and in significant ways.

[25:02] Again, if we assume that our soulmaking, our imaginal path and practice, is the same as any of those other areas, its particular avenues, the particular avenues that come with the imaginal, the openings, the creation/discoveries, they won't open, because certain presumptions, whether they're implicit or explicit, in the operating logos, in the conception of these other paths, even if I'm not conscious of that, they will fabricate experience along different lines, along certain lines, and with certain constraints. And in a way, we'll get off on the wrong foot, or divert into some other area. So, like we said, there's a lot of overlap in words – soul, and image, and soulmaking – but there are differences, especially in the philosophical view, regarding ontology and epistemology and all of that, this imaginal Middle Way, neither real nor not real, for example, being one of the key differences. And also the fundamental intention of soulmaking practice and imaginal practice being what we call the fullness of intention – the intention for soulmaking, if you like, above all else; including other intentions for healing and all kinds of other things, but this primary intention for soulmaking, or the fullness of intention to include everything, but paramount is the intention of soulmaking. These are fundamental differences, among others.

So these are important distinctions. I don't know whether you can sense that that matters or not, but to my mind, it matters a great deal, and will, as I said, determine or constrain or divert what unfolds and what opens from practice, or doesn't unfold or doesn't open. Sometimes, too, people assume that anything with any kind of seemingly mythical element equates as imaginal. It doesn't in our teaching, necessarily. Or sort of typical archetypes must be imaginal, or limiting the imaginal to sort of a predefined set of typical archetypes. Someone was saying, "I have four imaginal figures: the king, the jester or the trickster, the ascetic or the monk, and the lover." These are obviously very classic kind of archetypes and sort of tarot card emblems, almost stereotypes maybe, but if I do that, if I limit just to, for example, those four or any other four, or five or whatever it is, I'm limiting the whole logos. I'm limiting what I mean by 'image.' I'm limiting, I will end up limiting my practice. As I said, conception affects perception, and if the conception, if the logos is limited, it will limit the experience, it will send

the experience and the interpretation of experience down certain railway tracks with not much possibility, or much less possibility, of moving *off* those particular tracks and into other areas, more open areas, more fertile areas, more multidirectional areas.

So there won't be, in those cases, if I'm limiting my idea of what's involved in imaginal practice, there won't be the kind of infinite and endless possibilities for eros, psyche, and logos that we talk about when we describe the underlying workings of the soulmaking dynamic, this idea of the endlessness of possibilities, infinite, open-ended possibilities for the soulmaking dynamic and the fertility there. I know I've said it before; I think it's really, really important – yes, I have to say, also given my health situation and probably dying soon, it feels very important to me to make sure that all these rich waters of these different traditions don't just get mixed, because in that mixture, something will get lost, and probably the first thing to get lost (being, as it is, the rarest, I think, and in a way, somewhat unique), the imaginal paradigm will get lost, what we're calling the imaginal paradigm. So I think it's wonderful to explore all these other territories, if one has the capacity and interest, if one has the interest, or if they seem to be opening up. But one can do that and, at the same time, be really clear about what makes what *what*: what are the distinctions? What are the differentiations? How does that affect things?

As I said, when we use the word 'image,' mostly it's a slightly lazy shorthand for an imaginal image, and 'imaginal' means all those elements are involved, the whole soulmaking dynamic is involved, etc. We'll talk a little bit more about it tonight. We can, if you like, make distinctions – I think I might have said this before as well. Sometimes we have an image, let's say, of a situation, but we believe that image is true or real, really how things really are, and we might call that a fixation, or a fixated image, to be more precise. I'm going to delineate **three kinds of relationships with images** which determine, actually, whether that image is imaginal or not. **(1)** So we can have a kind of, "I believe it" – something happens, a person looks at me in a certain way, I have an image of that person, if you like, a sense of them, a **fixated image**. We also call it *papañca* in the Buddhist tradition. So that's one type of image, or image gone down a certain track into fixation. It's become fixated, it's become a real thing. There's not a lot of depth in it. There are not all the elements and the soulmaking dynamic and potential there. We could call that a fixated image, or *papañca*.

(2) There's also the case where something happens and an image forms – let's say of this person that looked at me funny, and now I think they hate me or whatever it is. There's an image, or a story, or a fantasy that's running in our mind about the whole situation or whatever it is, or about my narrative, or my life, or "Why does this always happen to *me*?", or "I'm like this," whatever it is, or "That person's like that." But in this case, in the second case, we're mindful of the presence of this image. We're mindful of what it is and what's going on in the mind. And because of the mindfulness, there's just a withdrawal of the credit, if you like, and the credulity of it. We're not *believing* it so much. So yes, I notice that the mind is spinning this story, but because of the mindfulness, just simple mindfulness that we've all been trained in, we're aware what's going on, we're not believing it so much, there's less identification with it, we're less lost in it and less believing it's true, etc. There's some distance to doubt it, or to doubt that it's completely true. So we can call that **mindful observation or awareness of an image**.

(3) And then there's the third category. So fixated image, mindful observation or awareness of an image is second, and the third category is what we call **imaginal**. An image that has become imaginal might have started as *papañca*. This is really important. So it might have started as *papañca*, but because of the way we skilfully related to it or worked with it, it became imaginal and opened up all those beautiful and enriching elements of the imaginal, the nodes of the lattice. So in that, again, one of the elements is this imaginal Middle Way – it's neither real nor not real. And that's part of what it means to be imaginal. We naturally sense that. Rather than completely believing it or just completely dismissing it as an irrelevant daydream, just flotsam of the mind, etc., there's this actually quite wide avenue of the imaginal Middle Way, and that's one of the characteristics of the imaginal, its kind of theatre. And because of that, we're less lost in it, less believing it completely, flat-out.

So when we talk about freedom in relation to what comes up in the mind, certainly when there's mindfulness of an image and mindfulness of that tendency or the stirrings of *papañca*, there's a certain amount of freeing with respect to that image, but when an image becomes imaginal, there's also freedom, a certain freedom – much deeper, richer freedom in relationship to it. Whereas the mindfulness of an image *disempowers* the image (mindfulness of *papañca* disempowers the *papañca*), when there's the kind of mindfulness that's involved in *imaginal* practice, when an image becomes imaginal, it actually empowers the image. So there's freedom, but the image is empowered instead of freedom that *disempowers* the image.

There's also a kind of way that mindfulness of an image, in the second category we're talking about, it kind of either just disempowers the image or cuts it, drains it of its life, or just holds it kind of static, whereas when an image becomes imaginal, it's allowed to be dynamic, and the whole soulmaking dynamic or the eros-psyche-logos dynamic is allowed to infuse it, and work on it, and ferment it, and expand it, and deepen it, and enrich it, etc. So we could make those distinctions in what we mean when we use the word 'image,' but as I said, mostly when I say the word 'image,' I mean imaginal image – it's just a bit of a mouthful. We also use the term 'fantasy' at times, and I guess I've used it less, but certainly some. So how would we define a fantasy? Again, it's a loose definition. Sometimes I just use the words interchangeably, image and fantasy, imaginal image and fantasy. But, in a way, I suppose I think of fantasy as something, an image that's a little bit *secondary*, if you like, or not so much in the main focus. Usually when we talk about imaginal practice, it's like, "Oh, this image came, this dancing ape," or whatever it is, this image, and that's an object, and so I'm focusing on that object in the practice, and I can decide how much or how little to focus on it. But fantasy is often something that operates, if you like, more in the background. It's not the main focus. So fantasies inform our life, if you like, inform our sense of our narrative, but also our choices in life.

So where we love deeply, where we are devoted deeply, usually there's a fantasy there. We might not *recognize* it as a fantasy. In other words, there's this kind of imaginal sense of things and of one's self that's usually operating a little bit in the background until we become aware of it as a kind of image that we call a fantasy. Sometimes we almost catch these, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye. They're not often deliberate objects of attention, unless we really draw attention to them. So, for example, when we gave those talks about fantasies of the path, different fantasies of the path, in a way, what we're doing is naming something, addressing it, giving some possibilities, and then lo and behold, people start to become aware of, "Oh, I guess *this* was the fantasy that was operating, and maybe *this*

one could operate, and this one wants to operate,” or whatever it is.¹ But unless you kind of get imbued with imaginal practice and this whole Soulmaking Dharma, one doesn’t often – certainly in, I guess, a lot of mainstream psychologies or mainstream Dharma, we don’t kind of acknowledge that element, that strand of our soul, of our existence, of our way of sensing life so openly. Once we become more involved in imaginal practice, we start to see and start to sense our whole lives that way and become more aware of the fantasies that are operating.

Okay. So if we’re, again, just reminding of what we mean by ‘image,’ ‘imaginal image,’ remember – and it really seems so worth repeating; I’m aware I’ve said it many times, but – an image is not necessarily visual. So the word in English tends to connote some visual object, usually, but when we use the word, it doesn’t necessarily mean something visual. Of course it can, but all the senses are involved. And sometimes we can talk about something imaginal, but we’re not even sure what sense it’s operating in, which of the six senses it’s operating in, or all of them, or none of them, or something else, some intuitive awareness or something. So I’ll try to give some examples. I think I gave this example years ago, but a couple of people have mentioned something similar: just meditating or on retreat or somewhere else, and there’s a sense of being kissed on the mouth. But I don’t see who’s kissing me, and yet the sense of that kiss is sensed with soul; it’s pregnant, it’s full of all the beauty, the eros, the meaningfulness, all the other elements of the imaginal that we’ve drawn attention to. So it’s coming through the tactile sense, the kinaesthetic sense, for example.

Or a person was describing they were doing *mettā* practice, using the phrases and repeating the phrases, “May I be well, may you be well,” etc., and then she felt like her hair was being combed, as if the *mettā* was sort of stroking her hair, the phrases of the *mettā* were stroking her hair. So something’s happening already with the sense of the *mettā* there, something’s beginning to ferment, to grow, to expand. And this sense of the sort of *mettā* stroking her hair, like combing her hair, that then became a kind of image of being attended to by a maid, and sort of readied for a banquet, she said. But none of this was visual. It was just a sense. It’s like, how do you know? It’s a sort of idea, but it’s a lived, fleshed-out image, some of which is kinaesthetic, and some is just a sense of an imaginal scene, if you like, of which one is a part, but it’s not visual.

Then in this sense of things, her heart is suddenly covered in armour. Numbness of heart had been something she had experienced and she was actually concerned about recently, and so here, into the image, comes the sense of armour. And then, if you like, in response to that sense of the armour around the heart, the maid’s hand came gently to touch the armoured heart. All of this, non-visual, as an example. And again, the beauty there, the heart being touched, the emotional resonances, the meaningfulness, the echoing and mirroring of one’s life – all these elements present, without it being visual. The depth, the dimensionality, all of that.

Some of you might have been on a retreat – I can’t remember which one it was – at Gaia House. I think it might have been the *Foundations of a Soulmaking Dharma*, and it might have been on the opening evening. I can’t remember. But we did an exercise, which I think Catherine and I led together, if I remember, and we were chanting *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. And some of you who were actually there may not recall this aspect of it, because I think at some point we also began milling around the room and coming into contact with each other – of course, in the context of silence and strangers and people you love and all that, it can be

quite loaded, so it might have been that the instructions I was giving at the time got a little lost. But whether or not they did, I'll explain what I said, and why it's relevant to what I'm talking about now, the non-visual aspect. So we were all chanting, and we were milling around, and then I asked, I think, if I remember, *whose* is this compassion? Whose is it?

So we introduced the chant with the usual radiating of compassion and care to oneself, to others, etc. So *this* mind, *this* heart, *this* consciousness has the intention of compassion, of soothing, healing, towards others, towards all beings, etc., is the usual way we would conceive of that: it's *my* compassion. So *whose* is this compassion when we're chanting the mantra? And, if you like, in asking that question, I could say, "Oh, it's mine," but with the words of the mantra filling the room, the space of the room in which we move and in which we're standing and moving is filled with these syllables, with these sacred syllables and chants, and *whose* is it? So supporting a sense of the mystery of it, and feeling it kinaesthetically, that we're *in* something here, something is coming through us, something is touching us from the outside, through the sound, with the energy body.

Then we can begin, or the possibility is that compassion itself can be sensed with soul. So it begins to have more dimensionality, more unfathomability. Again, these are some of the nodes of, the elements of the imaginal. It becomes, we sense it as *more* than what we have conventionally and habitually conceived it and viewed it, as basically a human quality or intention. It becomes something pertaining to the fabric of the cosmos, something that's, if you like, coming *from* another level, say the divinity or the Buddha-nature of Avalokiteśvara. It's not just mine. It's coming, it has this dimensionality, this depth; it has an unfathomability; it has a mystery; it has beauty. It's not visual. It's coming *through* the sound, but the sound itself is enriched and deepened through the imaginal sense that's opened, through being sensed with soul.

It has autonomy. In other words, again, it's not just *me* deciding to do the compassion: "It's just *my* intention, *I* generate this compassion." Yes, of course, wonderful, but the syllables themselves, the sacred syllables of the mantra, the energy of compassion has its own autonomy. It has its own intelligence. It has its own will. It has its own presence and its own origin. And grace – it's coming; it's not just me intending it. It's gift, all of this. And it's mystery. It becomes unfathomable in the sense of however I tend to limit – or I think I know what compassion means, "Compassion means something that wants to alleviate suffering, an intention that wants to alleviate suffering." Yes, great, wonderful definition of compassion. But as we start sensing it with soul, the whole definition, again, it's the soft and elastic edges – it begins to ferment, to expand, to grow, to deepen, to enrich. And this is not visual. It's felt with the body, with the energy body, in relation to the sound, in relation to sounding and hearing sound. It's an aural and bodily sense, not a visual sense. So that would be another example.

But since I keep getting notes or people tell me, "Oh, I don't get images," or "I don't see this or that," it may be worth giving a few more examples, just to fill out what we mean by 'image,' not so much by definition, but by example. Let's see which ones to give. It's a long story, I suppose, but I used to be a jazz musician, and then I gave up. I was a composer for a while. I gave up playing, and then I became a composer, and then I gave that up, threw myself into the Dharma full-time. But periodically in my life, there are times where I feel grief at – I miss music, you know? I miss making music. I miss playing. I miss that whole world. And sometimes what happens is I just get repetitive dreams of practising guitar or playing guitar, and it's like they just come and won't go away. Sometimes I start

playing again, and the dreams go away, and then I stop playing, and then they come back. [laughs] And this has gone on for years and years and years. As I said, sometimes I feel some grief at that. There's a lot to this. I'm just being very brief now.

So this was one of those days where I had been practising a little bit, guitar, just a little bit, and then stopped, and then the dreams resumed, and again, the sort of *dukkha* that went with that, the grief, or the feeling a little bit torn, actually – like I want to get back into music, but I have other obligations and other pulls. So I was sitting with that in the morning meditation. It wasn't particularly intense. But I let my mind – or perhaps it was already generating sort of music in my mind, sort of improvised melodies and lines and picture of a guitar and all that, with all the difficulty of the situation and other factors. But I let myself listen to the music. I let the music play in the mind, and there's a kind of looseness and fluidity, and it begins to feel wonderful. It's beautiful, and there's something powerful in it.

Again, it's a gradual transition – something that actually was a bit of a daydream, that actually was involved with some *dukkha*, some *dukkha* and a kind of daydream, then it begins to take on other dimensions and begins to grow as I go into that, what seemed like a daydream, and pay attention to it with a bit more respect and reverence, I guess. Then, at a certain point, I get a sense of music as a god. A pitch-black, featureless god, like black, empty space, featureless, but somehow with many long, waving arms, the way Avalokiteśvara has. But again, it's not visual. I can't explain exactly how I get the sense of those arms. And if that aspect of the image, the arms, was prominent at first, it soon faded very much to the background, and what became the prominent aspect of the image and the aspect that was, at that time, the most soulful, the most soulmaking – so again, this instruction to kind of hone in and tune to whatever in an image feels the most soulmaking; we'll come back to this – this god definitely felt 'masculine' somehow, and it felt like he has a claim on me. This god of music has a claim on me, on my soul, on my life. And in recognizing this claim and surrendering to it, I feel a relief, and a kind of understanding, like I understand something about my life, about my narrative.

My surrender to it feels to me like a 'feminine' mode (I'll put those in inverted commas), as if I'm being taken, I'm taken by this god. And there is an awareness that he is greater than me, much more powerful than me, this god, as all gods are. All that feels very beautiful and blissful in my whole body, and particularly in the lower belly. And I understand with it, it's not so much that it has to manifest materially; I don't have to *be* a musician again. I seem, in fact, not to be one of those chosen for that fully or throughout my life, at least. But I understand that this god, music, infinite in his possibilities, has a claim on me – almost as if from behind, so to speak, in the sense that it might not be the principal thing I'm directly focusing on or devoted to or attending to or working on, but whatever that principal thing is (Dharma or whatever) there will always be, flitting in and out with more or less intensity, the pull, the claim of this pitch-black god. And again, this teaching of the polydirectional pulls of the different gods and the impossibility of serving them all fully in the literal ways that might seem obvious to us.

So, again, maybe it had just a suggestion of a visual element right at the beginning, but actually, the sense of that, you could say, what became image was *I* became image, or the sense of my narrative, my self, my narrative self, became imaginal in relationship to this very powerful god of music. But it wasn't really visual like that. These kinds of images around music and working with music and the grief that I sometimes feel about leaving it, there are periods of time where it sort of comes quite

regularly and I'm working with it over maybe even a few weeks, on and off. But it's quite hard to articulate how one kind of senses that, what sense is it being known through. The claim of this god is like a kind of light or a shadow cast over my life, but I'm using those words metaphorically, and it's from elsewhere, so to speak, permeating my life, or like a canopy over it. And the redemption, the opening up, and the soulmaking come in the relationship to it, in the recognizing, acknowledging, surrendering to it, seeing myself, sensing myself with soul, my narrative with soul, and all that.

[57:39] Some days later, I think, there's another – I alluded to at the beginning of that description, there's a way that I can be sort of listening to music in my mind's eye, in my mind's ear, so to speak [laughs], and it's not necessarily crystal clear. It might be or it might not be. But then it kind of opens up a realm of music, like a cosmic realm, a sort of space of abstract music, if you like, like an infinitely fecund realm or world that's just music, just continual outpouring of music. And I think I've touched on this many retreats ago. That kind of opening to this sense, an imaginal sense of a realm of music – again, it's not visual here; it's aural. And even then, sometimes the aural begins to fade a little bit and becomes even more abstract. But it's definitely music, and it's definitely beautiful, and it's definitely around, and that can open up a kind of cosmopoesis in the moment with respect to the sounds that are actually around me, the birds and the wind and the cars, even, and whatever else, or people's voices, etc. Very beautiful. So the sensing with soul spreads to the whole environment.

Then, just following on this little series, I think I was driving – this was some months ago – to Gaia House, I think, and I was listening to music in the car. And actually, I wasn't that into it, or I found the particular thing that I was listening to a bit boring and predictable. But something happened, because I then got a sense, a soul-sense of my relationship with music, of music's claim on me, as I was explaining before – its power, its presence in, over, and through my life, getting a sense of it as more refracted. Refraction means, you know, when light hits water, it deflects – it doesn't follow a straight line; it bends to one side. That's one of the meanings of refraction. So in the same way this music, this presence of music in my life, is refracted, so that it's not actual music so much as the image of music refracted or radiating or shining into my life somehow. It's the image of music. It's not actual music. And instead of feeling sort of that subtle grief or disempowerment, grieving the impossibility of *actual* music right now in my life, there is an empowering, as if this is exactly right, that I have other manifestations to steward, to give and receive right now in my life.

I'm going to give a couple more examples of non-visual images. I had a dream that a Dharma teacher colleague – well, all I remembered in the morning were sort of fragments of the dream. There was the house where I grew up, and something about the sun shining, and a student of mine, and a Dharma teacher colleague. And she said – this is almost a year ago – she said, “You're going to die soon, relatively soon.” But she said something about, “You need to take care of your legacy, because there's a powerful possibility here, and you need to take care of that.” Just these fragments of a dream. In the meditation in the morning, I remembered the dream, or remembered the fragments, at least, and then sort of let those fragments go. And after they went, there was a sort of imaginal sense of my dying soon and not being here. Being dead, so not being present, not being a presence in the world, a physical presence in the world. So there's a sense of an absence. But this absence becomes a very powerful kind of presence or force in the world.

So again, there's no visual object there at all. It's actually an absence. But that absence has this imaginal sense to it. It was full of the elements, including the neither real nor not real, and all of that, and the beauty, and the echoing. It's very hard to describe. How do I sense that? Somehow, again, in the infinite echoing and mirroring, in order for that to be imaginal in that moment, it had to be connected with a recent sort of decision and intention, resolution I had, to try to study certain areas, including ethics in relation to soul, and the nature of matter and things like that. And so somehow, that was part of what allowed it to be image – that intention and sort of channelling of my will and energies felt powerful in itself, but it's somehow fused with or impregnates with life force and direction and power that imaginal absence that comes from death. Again, not a visual image at all. Very hard to articulate.

Let me give a couple more. This is quite recent, maybe a couple of months ago, or a month, six weeks ago – I don't know. I was being taken somewhere, to the doctor's, I think, or something like that, and it was a sunny day, early spring, very beautiful. I had my eyes open in the car. And an image came of my chest opening as if it was a kind of cupboard opening, two doors opening. But actually, the imaginal sense of it was more like what's called in the Jewish tradition the ark, or the *aron hakodesh*, basically a kind of tabernacle or holy receptacle, a cupboard where they keep the holy Torah, the scrolls. So as if my chest was opening like that, and again, I'm not sure it was really that visual; it was more a kinaesthetic sense with this association with it, but it felt very open and blessed, and it had vague traces of the sense or the idea of me or my body as sacred text, like the Torah scroll.

Again, this is perhaps more an idea than a visual image, this idea of self or body as sacred text, of something opening in the chest. But this sense then combined with a sense of, if you like, straddling two worlds – the world of life and the world of death. And I'm not even sure what I mean by that exactly. A sense of different planes of existence, of this plane of obvious material manifestation being just one plane; other realms, other dimensions, if you like, that maybe cast a different light on death. So there was a sense of myself then, with this probability, I suppose, of dying in the near future, straddling these two worlds, being somehow in both worlds at once, the world of life and the world of death. And with that straddling, tremendous softness and surrender and letting go and peace. And the gaze, the way, the ways in which I then saw the world around me, and the situation, and the fields, and the trees, and the sky, the sense of all that, the gaze on this life and the world – there was so much sense of mercy and compassion and beauty. And it felt, in that moment, all and any kind of gross level of clinging to life was gone. So there was really a sense of blessedness and peace, and it also felt like the blessings poured forth from my being, from my chest, from my eyes. Something very, very lovely.

So those two aspects, the opening of the chest, and the sort of sacred text, the place of the holy scrolls, the straddling of life and death, with all the peace and beauty that that gave to the sense of things, all things. And then a third aspect was a kind of immediate cosmopoesis. Right then, the sense of the land that we were driving through was perceived as having its own intelligence, its own life, in a way which I don't think I'd experienced before. So something quite new, again, very hard to pinpoint – this land has intelligence. Something I've touched on before, but the particular experience there was quite new. So all three of those aspects – and they opened simultaneously, actually – were experienced together. I maybe had touched on each of them individually in the weeks before in practice, formal or informal, but they kind of came together then. The eyes were open. The land was sensed with soul. The sense of death and my life and narrative – they're all equally important, integrated aspects of that

image. I don't know whether we'd call that an intrapsychic image or not. But partly I want to say it's not visual. Partly I want to give a sense of how images can actually become quite complex constellations in very lovely ways, fusing together different aspects, if you like.

Okay, last one of an example of something not visual. Sitting in meditation, and letting my body sense lead, with the whole energy body and that awareness, and letting that kind of guide the practice and guide me. I sense in the meditation, then, that I'm being tended to, lovingly, by angels, tender presences. They feel very, again, 'feminine' (quote), but it's not visual. So it's just there's something that feels feminine there. I'm not seeing them. I'm feeling something. I'm sensing something. But I can't exactly tell you what sense it's coming through. It's probably more kinaesthetic than anything else, but even that, the sensual detail is quite vague and not clear, not sharp, not distinct. But the imaginal sense is very strong; this is what's happening – tender, loving angels are ministering to me. It feels very beautiful and very delightful. It's not clear whether they're tending my corpse after my death, a sort of transition to death, or whether they're healing my still-living body. Something about that uncertainty – is it *this* or is it *this*? Is it healing, or is it actually a sort of image of beyond death, of a tending and ministering to a corpse that's been through the trials and tribulations, wearying difficulties of a life and illness and all that, and now receives these loving, tender, angelic ministrations after death? That uncertainty – “Is it *this*, or *that*?” – it seems somehow necessary to it. The answer to “was it this or that?” wasn't forthcoming. It seemed like it wasn't right, so I let it go, and just opened to the ministration. So much love there, so much love. Again, a sense, perhaps at this point becoming slightly visual, but not predominantly visual, of water being poured on me, like anointed or bathed with, again, tenderness, with blessing, my body being stroked, water poured on my head like that.

So those are some examples of images that are not visual. So just to labour the point, and to open up in case some people are still stuck on the sort of demanding visual objects in their imaginal practice. If we, again, just to linger a little bit, “Well, what do we mean by 'imaginal'?” I'm just filling out some things – not everything, just a few things tonight. So obviously we can have image as other, like we've said. Here's this dancing ape; I am looking at or seeing this dancing ape, this image, so the image is an object there. But also the self can become image, and that will happen anyway as we've talked about, and I want to go into that in a little more detail in this series of talks, how the self can and should get involved in the imaginal sense and become itself imaginal.

But it could be that the primary image *is* the self, or it takes place *here*, as opposed to an object seemingly *over there* in the psychic space. So, for example, again, I was sitting. A lot of things had happened in the last few days, so there were a lot of sort of emotional resonances and stirrings still present in the heart from all these different things that had happened in those days. Suddenly, out of the heart centre or the solar plexus centre – I can't remember – came this image of a sort of bare-branched tree, like a tree in winter, or an almost black tree. It grew out of my chest. But suddenly it burst into blossom, beautiful blossom, and I *was* that tree, or rather that tree was in the place of my body. So the image there, the self has become image, and the location in psychic space is *here*; my body has become the image, as opposed to it's over *there*, an object that I'm looking at. So both are possible.

Another thing we've talked about, this node, this element of create/discover, images are created/discovered. So this is an important thing, an important element, as they all are, in fact. But one of the implications of this element, create/discover, is that it's actually okay if you deliberately invoke

an image, or deliberately change an image, or deliberately bring back an image that touched you before, at another time. That's *potentially*, potentially, just as valid as an image that comes completely out of the blue, unbeckoned, it's brand new, fresh, I didn't do anything (it seems) to create this. So we tend to think, "Oh, if I made it happen, or if I make this happen in an image, or if I change an image this way, it has to be ego, and ego is something other than the unconscious, or ego is something other than soul," and all that stuff, you know? I don't buy into that distinction. I would rather say either way is okay, whether an image just comes unbidden and surprisingly and it seems like pure grace – great – or whether it seems like something I've generated, or even a guided meditation I'm following, or I'm resurrecting an image, revisiting an image, re-invoking an image that I've had before, whatever it is. What matters, rather than *who* made this, is is it soulmaking? And if it feels soulmaking, it doesn't matter that I've made it, that I've created it, that I just added something to that image, or took something away, or changed it or whatever. What matters is the sense of soulmaking. So even if it comes completely unbidden, and it's got all the mythical sort of qualifications, and we say, "Oh, this must be an image," if it doesn't feel soulmaking, it's not, in *our* language, imaginal yet.

What matters is the soulmaking sense. That's one of the nodes, as well – it's soulmaking. That's what makes it imaginal. And this is what we should use to guide us, are we on the right track. It's also part of how we support an image to become more imaginal and to deepen, by, as I said earlier tonight, tuning into what are the soulful or soulmaking aspects of this image. An image is a complex thing. What parts or dimensions of the image actually are the ones that feel soulful? And that's what we should gently tune into, linger with, feel, explore, etc. So this business about "I shouldn't make something happen, or this, because that's ego," or whatever, I wouldn't put too much stock by that.

Okay. A couple of last things for tonight. When we talk about the nodes or the elements of the imaginal, or I think we called them aspects of the imaginal, of the lattice at times – we've used those three words: nodes, elements, and aspects. When we talk about them – and again, I think this may have been something I've said before, but it bears repeating, I would say – it's not that we're just talking about these elements as being kind of on/off switches. I mean, they *are* sometimes. So a node suddenly fires; suddenly there's a sense of divinity, or suddenly the eros is there, or whatever it is, so like an on/off switch, or on/off settings. Sometimes they're more like each node itself, each element itself, is more like a spectrum, or more like a kind of dimmer switch. So when it's an on/off, it can feel a lot more passive – it's something that just happened, okay? It happened to me, suddenly something ignited, this switch just got flipped into the 'on' position. When it's a dimmer switch, there's actually the possibility of our intention turning the dial, turning the dimmer switch. Or if we use, I think we've used the analogy of fire, like this flame then igniting another flame. A flame also is something you can turn the gas higher or lower or, so to speak, put more wood on the fire, etc. So that fire is not so much on or off only; it also has a dimmer switch.

So it's good to think of the model of sudden sparking, sudden ignition of one node, and that node, in its sudden sparking, then triggering or igniting suddenly the sparking of other nodes or elements. That's a good model. It conveys something of the sort of sudden change of state, or sort of quantum leap that can often occur in imaginal practice, either on one's own or when practising with another. But other times, the experience of the individual nodes is more like, as I said, dials or faders – we can turn any one of them up by simply noticing it, paying attention to that node, element. And that noticing,

itself, that kind of delicate attention to it, without pressure, actually starts to either ignite it or turn it up, turn that element up in the experience. And then maybe the whole lattice, the other nodes, are then gradually turned up, or it may be they suddenly turn up once a certain threshold has been reached of the first element – there’s a sort of sudden ignition of others.

So there are lots of possibilities here. And again, I think I might have mentioned this before, but with practice, gradually, with the development of a sort of skill and art in this, what we might call the alchemy of imaginal practice, we may be able to guide the kind of relative balance of the settings, so to speak, of any two or even more of these dials, of these elements. So, for example, attention to the energy body is an element, and it might be in the background, a sort of background awareness, and we can turn up the dial on that and become more immersed in the sense of the energy body. Maybe it’s very pleasant in a certain kind of way, and it takes us into *jhāna*, and the image, as object, relatively speaking, becomes more in the background. So we can start to alter the relative balance of these different dials, if you like, or these different flames. Or with emotion – it might come to the fore, or less – or the sense of real/not real can come to the fore, or we can bring it to the fore. We can turn up these dials through our noticing or through tweaking them in certain ways.

It takes practice. It usually takes time to develop that kind of skill. But it’s similar, a little bit. Some of you will know from certainly the way I would teach insight practice and its relationship to *samādhi* that one might be practising certain insight ways of looking and, again, because they bring letting go, they bring ease in the energy body, a relative unbinding of clinging and the knots in the energy body. That starts to feel quite nice, and we can lean a little bit more into the awareness and enjoyment of that pleasant feeling in the energy body. And that’s taking us in the direction of the *samādhi*, and less priority to the insight at that point. We can play with any kind of relative degree of balance of the insight way of looking and the *samādhi* at that point. The metaphor I gave for that previously was like a hawk or any of those birds of prey that ride the thermal air currents, and when they change direction, it’s a very subtle sort of just inclining the wings this way or that way, even just a part of the wing, and it takes them in a different direction. It’s almost like they’re picking up, opportunistically, on currents that are already there. We pick up on currents that are already there, on flames and thermals, if you like, that are already there in the imaginal practice or in the insight/*samādhi* practice, whatever it is, and in just the subtlest of realignment through the attention, it changes the direction of practice. So that’s very possible.

I had said, wanting to be clear about what we mean by ‘imaginal,’ so explaining with all the elements, and the twenty-eight elements and this and that, but also that, in a way, it’s not so black and white. So we can talk about an image becoming more *fully* imaginal, or more *authentically* imaginal. And again, there’s a spectrum here, from, let’s say, *papañca* on one side, through something having more and more of the elements, if you like, or a richer and deeper involvement of each element, and then it becomes more and more fully imaginal. So partly that’s just a description of the unfolding of experience sometimes. But partly I say it also for pedagogical reasons, because some people hear the teaching and think, “Oh, I don’t know. Maybe I’ve never had an imaginal experience.” And another kind of person, or the same person at a different time, might be of a mind that says, just automatically assumes, that any image that they have is imaginal in the sense that we’re meaning it. And so, again, so

much about teaching is sort of contextual and relative to each student, or each student at a certain time. So somehow there's this Middle Way, where it's a spectrum.

So we can talk about becoming more fully imaginal. What that means is, don't necessarily believe, if you have a tendency to think, "Oh, I don't know what Rob and Catherine are talking about. I don't think I've ever had any such experience. I probably never will have. I don't know this, and I can't do that," *da-da-da*. Trust that you're on a spectrum, and you can grow, the experiences can grow, the explorations can grow more and more into what we call the fully or authentically imaginal, what we call the fully or authentically imaginal.

And for the other kind of person, these teachings about the nodes might be important to say, hold on, if you think something's imaginal, just check: has it got all these other factors in it? All these other elements? Because that's what we mean. So what you're calling 'imaginal' may not actually be fully what we mean yet, or what's possible in the directions that we're talking about. So it's tricky, you know? It's tricky as a teacher. Obviously it's tricky as a student. But if we think of it as a spectrum, I think it's helpful in all kinds of ways. There's a saying from the Dzogchen tradition, "Trust your experience, but keep refining your view." In the Dzogchen tradition, it's in relationship to the view of Dzogchen, or a certain emptiness view, let's say. Trust your experience, but keep refining your view. I think there's so much wisdom in that. This goes for the imaginal practice. It goes also for emptiness practices. We have certain experiences or a certain level of insight, and it may well be – it often *is* – that they can be deepened, that level of understanding or insight, that level of experience, if you like, can be deepened and enriched. So I'm not throwing out my experience of images or imagination; I'm trusting that, but I keep refining my view. What else is there? What's different here? What maybe am I not seeing? What's possible? What are some of these other elements, etc., that I maybe haven't experienced or incorporated or understood yet? So trust your experience, and keep refining your view.

I'm also reminded of Ajahn Chah talking one time. He said, "You know, as a teacher, I'm like someone walking by my students as they walk down the road, and there are ditches on each side of the road, trenches on each side of the road. If I see a student veering too much to the left and in danger of falling in that ditch, I say, 'Go right, go right. Move to the right,' and if that same student or another student looks like, at a certain time, they're in danger of falling into the ditch on the right-hand side of the road, then I say, 'Go left, go left.'" So teaching's always contextual. It's always relative to the student, where they are at that time, what their kind of mindset and, if you like, patterns of psychology are, all of that. So each individual, at any time, needs a slightly different emphasis.

One of my teachers, Ajahn Geoff, Ajahn Ṭhānissaro, when I studied *jhānas* with him many years ago, he said – I'm pretty sure he said – "If you think you've had an experience, and you think, 'Oh, that's the first *jhāna*,' or 'That's the third *jhāna*,' or whatever it is, just put Post-it notes on it for a while." You know those Post-it notes? Those sticky labels? Because then what will happen is your experience will mature, and it will change. So if you've had an experience of what you *think* was the first *jhāna*, "Oh, it must be the first *jhāna*," as you practise more with that state, it starts to change. Through practice, it refines, it matures, it grows, it starts to differ, and you say, "Actually, that was two states, and I got them mixed up. That one's that, and that one's that," as well as the experience of the self changing. We could talk a lot in terms of *jhānas*; I won't talk about that now.

But I think there will be some wisdom with saying something very similar for imaginal practice. We think, “Oh, this is imaginal,” or “That wasn’t imaginal.” Just put a Post-it note on it. Just be light with the labelling or the “have I achieved this or that?” It’s a real kindness, and it allows things to grow, as you grow into discovering more of what’s involved in what we mean by ‘imaginal.’

Last thing to say right now is that all of the elements of the imaginal – so all of those twenty-eight elements that we’ve listed and outlined, talked about elsewhere – they all have, as I alluded to briefly before, kind of soft and elastic edges. Each of them is unfathomably deep and infinitely developable. Each of them are created/discovered. So, again, what that means is humility or divinity or dimensionality or beauty, each of these and each of the nodes might mean something to us at this point in time, in our life, in our practice, but because they have soft and elastic edges, they can be stretched. What does beauty mean? What does it encompass? What does divinity mean and encompass? What does humility mean and encompass? It can get stretched. Its meaning can get expanded, deepened, enriched, become itself multidimensional, multi-aspected. As I alluded to right at the beginning tonight, things that are both foundations or roots or elements of imaginal practice *themselves* become ensouled, and we go on a journey with that, or they expand and teach us. They’re unfathomably deep. We never come to the end of what humility means. We certainly never come to the end of what divinity might mean, or beauty. And infinitely developable, and we’re involved in that, yeah?

So this is all part of, I think, what we need to bear in mind as we sort of walk this path of Soulmaking Dharma and practice, just helping in the sense of – some of it’s for clarity’s sake, some of it’s for attitude’s sake. What’s an attitude that nourishes the practice, that gives it space to grow, that gives it good soil so that it can be really fertile? Okay. I think that’s enough for tonight.

¹ One talk that covers fantasies of the path and some lines of inquiry for practice can be found in Rob Burbea, “In Love with the Way: Images of Path and of Self” (10 Feb. 2017), <https://dharmaseed.org/teacher/210/talk/40178/>, accessed 17 March 2021.