

Eros Unfettered (Part 1)

Eros Unfettered Retreat

Rob Burbea

January 23, 2017

<https://dharmaseed.org/teacher/210/talk/40171/>

So let's begin to explore a little more, to unfold and unpack this movement of eros, the movement of soulmaking, what I've been calling the soulmaking dynamic or the eros-psyche-logos dynamic and look at that and some of its consequences, what it involves, what it brings into being and opens up, and also some of the ways that whole organic movement can be hindered or blocked or impeded or weakened or stopped in some way. So both speaking sort of in theoretical terms, but hopefully with examples and fleshing it out that way. So really there's a double intent here over the next few talks of opening up the possibilities of eros, opening up for ourselves the possibilities, the possible manifestations of eros in practice, in life, in our existence, in the way that we relate to existence and to image, et cetera. So opening up the possibilities but also looking at what the possibilities of eros open for us, so what comes out for us, what is made available to us because of the movement and the manifestation, the different manifestations of eros. So double intent there.

In a way, through this, we're circling around things and ideas and teachings that we've already touched on. So there's the hermeneutic circle again; we're touching on something, touching on something else and then coming back to revisit the first thing, round and round in much the same way that a sewer sewing stitches or sewing a cloth or knitting a scarf or something will come back over the same area to add another thread, another color, or entwine threads together, in the way for instance a tapestry gets woven, working over the same material, back and forth, adding something, adding more intricacy, more density, more complication, more solidity, more color, et cetera.

You know, it's interesting. Some people certainly who work with this kind of material or imaginal practice would wonder, do wonder, "Okay, so I'm exploring all this imaginal stuff and I'm on this retreat or whatever, I'm devoting a solitary retreat," someone devoted a month to exploring these practices, and it kind of occurs to them at some point, "Wow, there's a lot of eros here and often very sexual, explicitly sexual in the imagery, and why all this eros? Why all this sexuality?" So non-sexual and sexual eros in imaginal practice or imaginal retreats. "Why? Is that right? Is that correct? Is it okay and all that?" So we'll go into all this as well. But why? It's a good question. It's an interesting question.

One reason is, to begin to give a response, one reason is we love eros. We love that fire and we love its juiciness, the juiciness of eros in a more watery metaphor. We love that. Something in us loves that. And the more, if you like, eros there is flowing through us, the more we love it. In a way, eros loves itself. We'll come back to that. Eros has its erotic connection with itself. So that's one part of it. Another thing is in imaginal practice in the way that we've set it up, the teachers and the teachings allow it. We allow that eros. And the teachings, the logos, the conceptual framework that we have set up and we're setting up, the explanations, et cetera, they sanction it. They legitimize eros. The examples we give in the teaching also, through example, "This is an image of mine. This is an image of Catherine's. This is what a yogi reported to us that we asked them and they said fine and we're sharing it." The examples we share also open something out, normalize it, legitimize it, give it place, give it space within the teachings.

And with the examples, also the range of images that are described or related in the examples, the range is broad. And this is deliberate so that we get the sense of the range of possible archetypes, imaginal figures, characters that come, that are operating, that demand attention, that make other demands, that ask for reverence in a way and devotion. All of this is huge. So that – and I've spoken about this in other talks in the past – we're not locked in and certainly not unconsciously locked in to just a narrow range of sort of traditional Buddhist images of chastity, equanimity, even temperament,

evenness of mind, calmness, sobriety, *just* the fantasy of the hermit, you know. The range of images and archetypes is broad, and that gives permission for the ones that don't fit into the kind of, if you like, more official but unconscious canon of fantasy that often gets communicated in the teachings, in more, let's say, traditional teachings, among some streams of Buddhism.

So that's part of it, it's sanctioned by the teachings and the teachers and the examples, et cetera. It's legitimized, given place. Another important reason is that psyche and the imaginal involves beauty. The imaginal involves beauty. Again, wide range of what that word, beauty, means. But generally speaking, beauty is a component, an element of the imaginal, of images when they're alive as imaginal images to us. And where there's beauty, there's attraction. There's going to be eros as one kind of possibility of that attraction. So in a way, eros, as I think I said before already, is intrinsic to the imaginal. We could say that. So of course it's going to come up. You do imaginal practice, eros is intrinsic to it, of course it's going to come up. Eros is intrinsic to psyche, I would say, to some degree or other, and the more you allow the imaginal, the more you actually allow eros.

And if an imaginal figure is felt by us or regarded by us as other, as an otherness to us – it's not being reduced to a faculty of my mind or an aspect of my consciousness or even an aspect of my psyche; it's not being reduced to a result of my personal history, et cetera – then that otherness, that personhood between me and the image, or even between two different images, even two different intrapsychic images, eros is allowed because of the otherness there. Eros is an attraction between othernesses, we could say. And when, in that otherness, we feel or we regard images or we play with the perspective that images have a claim on us, they have a claim, a deep, far-reaching, profound, soul-resonant claim on the psyche, the way a lover does, the way a lover has a claim on us, or a nuptial claim of a spouse – so that claim on us is also erotic. It doesn't necessarily mean it's sexual, but it's erotic in the way a lover's claim is erotic, and it gives rise or it involves eros.

Always, and I think I've said this as well, where there's the imaginal and imaginal figures, it's not always apparent at first, but there's always some kind of love. It might be a kind of love, a flavor, an expression of love that doesn't fit into the usual range and the usual picture of what the mind has of what love looks like. It can be, for instance, quite stern or strong or involve very sort of seemingly even violent elements or something, but there is some kind of love there with imaginal figures, both ways. We love them and they love us. And there's a desire for contact. In a way, this imaginal figure is an *angelos*, is an angel, a messenger. It wants to make contact with us, and we want contact. We desire intercourse, if you like, in the broadest sense of that word, intercourse (again, not just sexual). And that desire for contact is, according to this very basic what I'm calling the small definition, the loose definition of eros, that's the desire for contact, to open to, to relate with. That is eros. Desire for contact.

And again, if an image, as we sense more into an image – and again, it might not be at first obvious – but we sense more into an image, and what makes it an imaginal image is this quality or dimension that we begin to notice with imaginal images: their unfathomability, their inexhaustibility. They're not reducible to this or that explanation. We don't ever figure them out, or if we do, they die. They can have this sense of endlessness to them, bottomlessness almost to them. And because of that, because of their unfathomability and inexhaustibility, there is, so to speak, always more for eros, the erotic movement towards that image or in relation to that image, there's always more for the eros to open to. There's always more for it to penetrate. Always more for the eros to know.

So these words – penetrate, open, receive, know – these are all words with sexual connotations, as I said before, but there's no limit. There's no limit to the penetration because of the imaginal figure's unfathomability. That imaginal figure might be an actual person, a live, flesh and blood person in our life, or that we know about, or historical person – we've been through all this before – that our perception of them is imbued with beautiful imaginal dimensions and fantasy in the good sense of the word. And there's no bottom to that, so they are, in a way, infinitely penetrable, we can open to them endlessly. So all of that, and also sometimes – again, I've explained this before – wrapped up in

images, or an image bears this message, this *angelos*, this communication somehow of a *telos*, an end, a point, an end towards which the soul is moving. And so there is the eros of that magnetic attraction of the soul towards this telos, towards this end, something that we, the being, the soul, is beckoned towards, called towards, what Henry Corbin calls *the angel out ahead*, or we could say the divine root of something that we're called to. But that angel out ahead, we never reach. It's not that we reach it in some kind of union, we finish with that. There's an infinite movement towards that. It keeps moving further and further. We move towards it and it takes a step back and beckons us further and further, if you like, on the path of soulmaking, on the path of deeper, wider divinity.

So there's something about who we are becoming, our telos, in some images. They are redolent with that, they communicate that, they shine with that and beckon us in that way. And that telos implies or needs eros, that erotic movement. So we could say all this in relation to this question, "Why all this eros? Why all this sexual imagery, even more, in the imaginal practice when a person devotes themselves to this kind of practice for a time?" So we could say all that. Of course, someone might say, "No, no, no. You let people daydream and what do you get? You get the defilements running amok, the defilements running away with themselves, the increase." So that might be someone's sort of knee-jerk assumption. But as I said, I hope you can really see when you explore these practices in the careful ways that we're talking about that that's absolutely not the case. We'll revisit the doubts that may arise there, but you can see that's not the case.

So there's all these answers that we could give, but we can kind of tie all that together, again weave it together, through this I think more elegant explanation of what we've been calling the eros-psyche-logos dynamic or the soulmaking dynamic. If that's too kind of technical sounding for you, we can say the explanation, the exploration of how the fire of eros spreads, how it catches alight and sparks fire wider and wider so that it spreads; how the tree, if you like, of soul grows, the organic movement of the growth of this tree; or the way the web of soulmaking is woven. So these are different, maybe more poetic languaging of what we mean by the eros-psyche-logos dynamic or the soulmaking dynamic.

And I've talked about this in other talks, I think in those set of talks, *A Sacred Universe: Insight, Theophany, Cosmopoesis*, and in more detail than that in the series *An Ecology of Love*. But it's so important and so fundamental I want to revisit it again and add more to it and more dimensionality and more of the implications and what's involved. Why emphasize this so much? Why am I putting so much emphasis on this? Because I think, or it seems to me, that – it's a kind of theory; I guess it's theory, a kind of conceptual framework, if you like, is itself a logos that explains quite a lot in a way that's relatively simple, and in that way, there's a kind of elegance to it. It integrates quite a lot of seemingly unrelated experiences or observations we have in life and in practice and in relationship. It ties a lot of things together that, at first sight, don't seem like they might have anything to do with each other.

It also, funnily enough, predicts quite a lot, like a kind of theory I guess predicts. So in the same way, for example, as the conceptual framework of dependent origination and emptiness and fabrication that we talked about earlier on the retreat, on the course, understanding that, you begin to be able to predict, "Ah, yeah, when I look at something this way, that involves less *avijja*, and so I expect that when I focus on whatever this thing is – a body pain or a visual perception or whatever – when I look at it that way, through that lens of less *avijja*, I expect that perception to fade." So there's a kind of prediction there. And we see with the practice, that kind of (what I would call) insight meditation practice, practicing with emptiness and dependent origination, we actually see those predictions bear out. We develop that practice and lo and behold things fade as we would expect. And people report experiences to us and you would expect, I expect, if I ask someone, "And then what happened? Did it fade?", and they say yes. Why? Because we understand the kind of predictive power of that theory or conceptual framework or whatever.

And in the same way, it also has something, I think, this eros-psyche-logos dynamic, this sort of conceptual framework that I'm offering, has something of a diagnostic capacity/capability as well. It's a different model of the psyche, different psychological model, if you like, than a lot of the ones that we're used to. So it's another way of diagnosing what the problem is when we run into problems in relationship or intrapsychically or in all kinds of areas. And with all that, you know, it's also a conceptual framework that can guide our practice, and this is a big part of what these kind of understandings offer, whether it's emptiness or this area of soulmaking that we're talking about. Understanding the big picture, a conceptual framework that holds the big picture together, ends up being so helpful in guiding our practice because it informs the sort of micro-choices moment to moment: "What am I trying to do here? This thing seems kind of blocked. How can I understand that or bring some understanding to bear that opens it up again, that makes it more fertile, more rich, allows me to travel further, et cetera? Where do I navigate right now?" All that, the big picture, an understanding of the big picture informs the small, moment-to-moment micro-decisions in practice, or the more mid-level decisions about what should I focus on now for this retreat or whatever it is. And that's applicable to whatever you want to talk about – insight meditation or the Dharma as a whole or soulmaking, et cetera.

Okay. So let's explain or flesh out, both theoretically and through example, taking our time, this what we're calling the soulmaking dynamic. So we've said that eros wants connection. Actually I used to define it that way: eros wants connection with the other, with the erotic object, with the beloved other. Now, whether that other is an actual person, as I said, in one's life who one has a certain kind of relationship with or some kinds of relationship (doesn't have to fall into one category there), certain kinds of relationship that allow this imaginal dimension, these imaginal dimensions, whether it's that or it's a purely so-called intrapsychic image, I used to say eros wants connection with the other. But that word, connection, it occurred to me that actually, especially in our circles, our kind of circles, people who are sort of psychotherapeutically versed or spiritually versed, et cetera, it's in a way lost its power. It's so used, that word, connection, "I just want to connect with you" or "I felt really connected" and this and that, in a way it's kind of lost a lot of its power and potential as a word.

So we can add some other words. Eros wants connection, it wants contact, it wants intimacy, it wants touching, to touch the beloved other, the erotic object, and to be touched by. So already with those words – connection, contact, intimacy, touching – they each have already, they're quite pregnant words, they already have quite a range. So try and hear these with sort of like – let the words themselves also expand. Because we say "to be touched" means also to be moved, that the heart is moved, but touching also involves the body, it's embodied, it's involving the body, whether that's imaginal body or the actual physical body or whatever. And then on top of that, we can touch with all the senses. The eyes touch, there's the touch of sounds, there's the touch certainly of the hands, but actually all the senses are involved, and of course touch is a sexual word as well.

So connection, contact, intimacy, touching and being touched, penetrating we've already said, opening to, receiving. And again, really see if you can hear these words in all the sort of full potentiality of the range of what they can mean. Sometimes, especially in our circles, with all the openness that we have – heart openness and that kind of thing – the actual words kind of get constrained, for instance just around heart or something like that, or connection, the very idea gets a little constrained. So if it's possible to hear these words with more of a range in them.

So eros wants all that, but Eros, classically in Greek mythology, Eros is – I don't know about always, but often, let's say, or always, or we could say often [laughs] because it depends on whether we're doing the small definition or the big definition. But let's say Eros is accompanied by two other gods, Pothos and Himeros. So you've got a sort of trinity, erotic trinity called the Erotes, a little band called the Erotes. I think that's how you pronounce it. Eros, Pothos, and Himeros. I think it's Plato who says somewhere or other pothos has to do with what is not so much present but what is absent. It's the

yearning, the longing for what is absent. But in our case, particularly what is not yet here. We'll come back to that.

And himeros, again, Plato I think explains, himeros, in Greek, the word is related to the word for stream and the word for rushing, the way a stream rushes – we say the rushing of a stream. So there's a stream of soul. It's part of this soul movement. So this pothos and himeros accompany eros. Now, what does that mean? Pothos is always wanting more. It accompanies eros. So we say that eros is always accompanied by this wanting more, and what's not yet here. So it wants something further, wider, beyond what has been already reached or met or encountered or known or achieved. And so because of this, because of the pothos that always goes with eros, there's an endlessly dynamic quality or aspect, facet, to eros. Eros is endlessly dynamic in its thrusting, its penetration, its opening, its embracing movement. So it is a movement with the himeros and this pothos, eros is a movement that's endlessly dynamic. It will always want more.

So we can see, as I already said in the glossary, eros is a kind of desire. It's one kind of desire. Actually it's a whole group of desires that are erotic. But it's a kind of desire that always is related with the imaginal or involves the imaginal. Eros is a kind of desire that always involves the imaginal. And it wants, eros wants, eros is a desire to know, to experience the other, the object, the image, more deeply, more widely, more sensitively, more finely and subtly as well as grossly, the kinds of more obvious intimacy and knowing as well as really developing more and more subtlety in that knowing, meeting, touching, connecting, penetrating, opening to, receiving of the image, of the object, whatever it is, and to know it and experience it more completely and more fully. So there is, as I said, this movement to keep thrusting, to keep opening.

Now, in this movement, it's a movement, if you like, into the imaginal, and eros penetrates the imaginal, if you like, and inseminates it, or opens to it and is inseminated itself by the imaginal, by psyche. It fertilizes the imaginal, the soil, if you like, the territory of the imaginal. And so there's an increase in what we're calling psyche, or there's an increase in the image – there's a swelling, a tumescence, a growing of something, not so much as images getting carried sort of...the way daydreaming, one thing kind of leads to another, and they just get carried away. But there's an increase of the sort of sense of the richness of the imaginal object. It gains in imaginal richness, in complexity, the way let's say a piece of paper or fold of cloth gains more when you crunch it up and it has all these folds in it. ...That actually doesn't work because I was going to say it gains more surface area, but. Maybe it does. I don't know. I have to think about the mathematics. Anyway. There's an increase of the dimensionality, the aspects or folds, the faces of the beloved other, the particularities. It's almost like we discover more particularities there, more richness, more complexity, a widening of who they are, what this thing is that is the beloved object or other, the imaginal object. They become wider and deeper. They contain more, more dimensions.

And in that, the idea, the logos, or with that, the logos is also pushed on. Because if I am regarding let's say a person in my life, and I'm regarding him or her this way – could be whatever my relationship with them there – and they become alive for me in this erotic imaginal way, and there's all the beauty of that, and they gain dimensionality, and I see, for instance, an aspect of how they are, a theophany, how their being and the very particulars of their being and their expression and their actions for me is a theophany and it's somehow, let's say, a face of God, not separate from God, how somehow they are tied in with the manifestation of Buddha-nature and divinity in really particular ways. So not just the fact of, "Oh, yeah, everything is love," as we said before, "Everything is awareness, therefore it's Buddha-nature." But really through their particularities, through their personhood, through this exact way that they're appearing to me in a new way.

So then, because I'm seeing all that and sensing it, it's having an impact on the psyche, the idea I have of not just who *this* person is but who *any* person is, the idea of a human being, the logos of a human being, is pushed on, is stretched. And potentially at least, it starts to expand to include the idea that a human being is somehow not just a biological mechanism, et cetera, complex as that is,

marvelous as that is, but is also, at the same time and wrapped up in that, intricately involved in that, is also a theophany. And the idea of what theophany is and the relationship of the divine and the human and the soul, all that gets expanded as well, potentially at least. So that through this thrusting and opening of eros the image, the psyche, is expanded, and also the logos is expanded in relation to this object and maybe in relation to others as well, as we'll come back to.

And because they are now more yummy, more complex, more rich, have more facets, more refractions of light from the different facets of the jewel that they are are revealed to me, then that entices, it elicits, it evokes more eros, an increase in the eros. So the whole thing, eros-psyche-logos – eros inseminates psyche and logos, and the larger, fuller, more complex and beautiful psyche and logos inflame eros further. So you get this kind of inflating, self-fertilizing, mutually-fertilizing dynamic. I was going to say snowball effect but that doesn't strike me as a good metaphor. But that kind of movement, the way they feed each other, and the whole thing gets more and more fecund, and expands and widens and deepens.

So you could say we discover more, I discover more in my beloved. I discover more dimensions, more faces, more theophanies, all of that. And at the same time, we acknowledge that, well, I'm creating that. The psyche is creating it. So we'll come back to this, and I've mentioned it already. The whole process, psyche creates/discovers more to the object, more to the beloved other. And this process, this expanding sort of mutually fertilizing dynamic, widening, deepening, enriching, complicating, et cetera, it doesn't happen all at once. It happens over time. And it's not at all necessarily smooth in the sense that it happens usually in – I mean, it *must* happen in stages. It inevitably happens in stages. It happens in time in the sense that something opens and we're taken with that, we're exploring that, and there's an expansion to that level, and then we're with that for a while, and there's beauty there, and at some point it grows again (potentially, at least). So there's stages. It's not smooth in that sense. And it can also be not smooth in the sense that it can be, this whole dynamic, this whole movement, can be blocked or diverted. So we'll come back to that, as I said, later, and what can happen there.

But if it's unimpeded, then also notice there is not ever any completely knowing, completely penetrating, completely opening to. We never fully know or penetrate or open to, receive the beloved other, the object, whatever it is, inanimate object or an object in nature, of nature, or another, or an intrapsychic image. We never completely or fully know it, open to it, et cetera. There is no finality possible to our knowing. This creating/discovering is potentially infinite, driven by the pothos, always more, always more, always more. Or the himeros, if we want to use that, the flowing, the onward flowing.

So in that, what we're also going to add is it's not just the object that gets amplified, extended, widened, deepened, complicated, made sacred, discovered/created. Because subject and object are always mutually dependent arisings, they always go together, it's not just the object, but the subject, the self as well, is subject to this same process. It's caught up in the same web. It's involved, it turns with the same movement. So not just the object is given dimensionality, or its dimensionality is revealed or discovered, and its beauties and complexities and all that given to it or discovered in it. Not just the object, but we ourselves. The imaginal sense of the self is also expanded in just the same way. Everything that I said in relation to the object applies to the sense of self, the imaginal sense of self in that moment, as that's happening. It's not always obvious to people, and sometimes it gets missed, and there's consequences to that so we will come back to that.

But again, subject and object always go together, and another thing that goes together with all that is the world, the larger sort of perception. Not just the perception of the object and of the self (so self and other), but also world. So all this goes, just by virtue of the dependent arising of perception, self-other-world always get fabricated together. So that depending on the eros and the kind of eros and how that's fabricating imaginally, there will be a self-other-world constellation. They get co-constellated, self-other-world. Actually we could say self-other-world-eros. So we're going to come

back to this. But all of them, if you like, psyche and logos and eros is expanded and deepened and widened, enriched, all of that, with all of these – with other, with self, with world, self-other-world, and with eros itself. So that eventually they, too, in this sort of process, in stages, eventually they, too, are felt, are seen to have more dimensions and eventually divinity. And this is where we were talking about the cosmopoesis comes from. You work with an image and it spills out into the perception of the world. Why? Because there's the object, and there's the eros with the object, and self and world will be tied in, woven into that imaginal co-constellation inevitably because they're part of that four part co-constellation. Yeah? We'll revisit all this. Okay?

Now, we could say eros-psyche-logos are separate things, and we could talk about them like we talked about eros in the sort of small definition. We could say, and I said this before, you know, eros really implies and involves that whole eros-psyche-logos dynamic, the whole soulmaking dynamic. There's a way we can also say that eros, psyche, and logos – eros, image, and concept if you like; or eros, image and idea – are aspects of psyche, they are aspects of soulmaking. They're not really separate. And again, we'll revisit this. But image and idea are not really separate, and image actually always involves ideas, plural, so they're not really separate.

Now, we could ask, what does the eros desire? What does it want to touch, to know, to penetrate and open to, exactly? What is the other? Whether it's a purely intrapsychic image or, as I said, an actual person or an actual thing or object or some thing in nature or an animal or whatever, what does the eros want to touch, know, penetrate and open to exactly there? The object that it desires is in fact image and idea. It's psyche and logos. Eros wants psyche and logos. This is another way of kind of thinking about what's going on. It's actually – the object is made up, if you like, the nature of the object is that it is psyche and logos, it is image and idea. You understand? So even if I'm talking about a flesh and blood person, and I'm in a certain relationship to them that allows this, or one of the kinds of relationship that allows this kind of way of seeing them, gives it permission, the object, my beloved other, is image and idea wrapped up with flesh and blood reality, so to speak.

Someone might say, "But what about the real object as it is, as it really is? What about the object as it really is?" To which, at this point, you know what the response is. The response to that question, "What about the real object, the object as it really is?", is "Hahahahahahaha!" [laughs] Right? Always there's a concept, there's logos involved in any perception. I've said this so many times. If there really isn't any conception involved in perception, there won't be any perception. There will be a fading. Why? Because concept is part of *avijja*. Okay? So "the object as it is," mmm, problem with realism there, okay? And I'm not going to go into all that again, to do with emptiness and the absence of inherent existence and things.

Another way of saying all this could be that perhaps actually what eros wants is more psyche. Eros wants psyche, and it's endlessly, if you like, desiring psyche. And there's the myth. Some of you will know the myth of the love of Eros and Psyche, the love between Eros and Psyche. Eventually they get incorporated into the pantheon of gods. But we could say in all this, from a theoretical perspective, what's eros wanting in all this? We could phrase it a few different ways, and one of the ways is because the object is psyche and logos, and because logos, idea, is wrapped up with image anyway, and the object is image and idea, that's really psyche. Eros wants soul, yes? And it wants image, it wants cosmopoesis, it wants the ideas and the concepts and the images that are fecund and beautiful, you know. Eros wants psyche. It wants more and more psyche. Another way of saying all this is the soul loves soulmaking. The soul has an erotic desire for soulmaking. The soul desires soulmaking. So there's different ways of kind of explaining all this. But in a way, they're just different ways of saying the same thing.

So let's look at that dynamic with a few examples and things and talk a bit more about it, take our time and look at it in both imaginal practice and in life, and with different kinds of erotic objects, beloved others, if you like. So if we start with so-called purely intrapsychic imaginal practice – actually, I don't know – if we start with imaginal practice, you can see that the eros is, as I said,

sometimes explicitly sexual, obviously sexual, and sometimes not. So let's start with the sexual. Partly, as I said, because partly what I want to do in these talks is to open up the sexual, open up that doorway of the sexual, and kind of, yeah, legitimize, sanction it. So again, we've said before, the sexual is not equivalent with the erotic; it's one, if you like, one face of the erotic. So when we say erotic, we don't, as has now become common parlance, mean sexual. The sexual and sexual images are just one way, or sexual action in life, is just one way of knowing, experiencing, contacting, connecting, opening, penetrating, et cetera. It's just one way, one, if you like, strand or thread of the erotic movement.

So we've said that several times, but at the same time, it's not interchangeable with another way. In other words, it's not like, "Oh, I'm not sure about the sexual. Rob's saying it's just about knowing, experiencing, contact, so let me just replace it with another kind of knowing." You can do that if you want. But I wouldn't at all assume that they're interchangeable, the types, the strands of eros, okay? Let's linger with this for a while. You know, sex – and we'll come back to this – and sexual images are not, I would say, they cannot be reduced, we cannot assume that they're, for instance, just expressing love, and that's what sex is, and that's what this or that sexual image is just expressing love, or it's just wanting union, to melt together into oneness. Or, certainly, that it's just a desire for pleasant sensations. So sex, and maybe sexual images, can be that those are the primary things involved, but it's actually much more involved, I think, with what is driving sexuality and what is generating sexual images, if you like.

So I'd be cautious of narrowing it down that way and assuming. And again, spiritual circles, these kinds of ideas about sexuality are very common – an expression of love, or it's wanting oneness and union, or it's just a seeking of pleasure. Remember something from previous courses about the specificity of images. Images are very, very specific. So if we reduce them, they lose their specificity. "This image, with all its particular nuances and details of it and very particular ways it was felt and sensed, it can be replaced just by an idea of, Oh, it was wanting union or it was a movement towards oneness or something like that." The specificity of images is something really, really important. So it's not just the sexual is just one way of knowing. I mean, it is true, but it's also the image wants *this* way that it generates. The image shows *this* way, whatever this way is, this particular way of penetrating, of opening, of intercourse in the larger sense of intercourse. *This* expression of eros is being shown in the image. *This* is what the image wants.

So there's a principle here that I've touched on in previous retreats about just trusting, if you like, the intelligence of the soul, the intelligence of the dynamism of the soul. And sometimes that's hard to generate. We'll come back to this. But just playing with a little bit of trust nourishes the process. So it's very specific, the images are specific, and they're not just reducible, interchangeable, or one kind of eros with another, et cetera. Okay?

And if we extend that point, you also see that implied in that idea is the exact specificity of the sexual image, because we're talking now about sexual images, starting with that. What you'll notice, I think inevitably, if you really do these practices and you really open to this and you explore them in the ways that we're talking about, with mindfulness, with sensitivity, with awareness of the energy body, with noticing the soul resonances and all of that that we've described in what we consider imaginal practice, how we're defining it, you will find that often – maybe not all the time, but often – the images, an erotic image that might come up, whatever it is, and be what you're meditating with, is what I like to say is sufficient unto itself. So there might be a particular activity, sexual interaction or communication or relationship going on – and this is true for all images, you know, whether they're sexual or not – but it's sufficient unto itself.

There's some particular activity embodied, manifested in the image itself that is, if you like, intrinsic to the image, okay? That means it doesn't, in the usual way that images, like "one thing leads to the next" as they say, for life and also with images, this happens and then that happens and one thing led to the next, et cetera. There's a kind of sufficiency unto itself that's part of what the image kind of wants, its intelligence. So it's not that you're working in meditation and something erotic arises,

something sexual, and then there's this kind of progression or escalation to, say, genital intercourse or orgasm or whatever. It doesn't have that kind of escalation necessarily at all – in fact, quite rarely. There's something about just – it's just that, whatever that is. Of course, that might be genital intercourse. But it doesn't have this escalatory kind of propulsion to it. Nor, certainly, does it imply at all or propel one to concretize that action in any way in the world. So we've been through all this anyway in regard to imaginal practice, but remember that in relation to sexual images as well.

So yes, the pothos and the himeros, the always wanting more and the stream, the onward rushing stream, will give rise, will, as I said, impregnate the imaginal, will impregnate psyche and fertilize the images, but that fertilization is a deepening, an enriching, a giving dimension to and discovering dimension in the image. It's not in the same way that sort of unmindful daydreaming just sort of, as I said, leads one thing onto another, or fantasy in the way that it's usually meant, being lost in sexual fantasy or whatever in the poor meaning of the term. It's not that kind of wanting more and rushing on that way. So if we go back to again things from other retreats that you've listened to. There's narrative images where the whole thing seems to progress in time in this kind of narrative way, "This happened, then this happened"; there's a sort of either aimlessness to it or a kind of purposive narrative, "This thing happens and then it's great because this next thing was able to happen and this next thing and whoopee!" So that's usually, not always, but that's usually a telltale sign that the ego has gotten involved and it's spinning a narrative usually towards some kind of triumphant thing or to collect something or something like that. Or towards doom.

But this is in contrast, narrative images are in contrast to what we call the imaginal or iconic images where there's a quality that we can notice of eternity or timelessness to them. They're more characterized by that. Same with the sexual imaginal, the erotic imaginal. They don't move in time towards some great "whoopee!" necessarily. So again, it's something to do with the integrity, if you like, and the intelligence of the image, that they don't necessarily escalate, and often they don't escalate in that sort of more common way. They also, again, if we're with this idea of the integrity and the intelligence, specificity of an image, you'll notice as you play with these kinds of practices more and more, and with the energy body, et cetera, that images have what we might call their own specific register or wavelength of appearance or energy. I can't remember if I've said this on other retreats. I think I have. I'm almost certain I have.

So in other words, one could have a sexual image arise that one's working with in meditation and it could be very, very ethereal. The forms, the bodies involved, are just sort of light bodies, maybe of different colors. It's all very kind of insubstantial. The resonances with the energy body and the tangible perception of the image is towards the insubstantial end of the energy bodies. Or it can be very substantial, just feels and looks really solid and earthy and fleshy and very substantial. That whole range is available and you'll notice again – you can play with it, because you can actually learn to modulate the register of an image. But it seems to me that again the images have a certain kind of integrity and intelligence in their specificity. So if it wants to be really fleshy and solid, that's what it somehow wants to be, and not to just immediately want to make it ethereal or the other way around, okay? So this is not always simple as a subject; depends on the person and stuff, but we're saying something here about trusting the specificity of images.

And related to that, there's also a huge range in the sexual imaginal, the erotic imaginal – well, in the sexual imaginal – of let's say intensity and carnality, if you like, of lust and wildness. So there's no better or worse with these ranges. Something that seems like really lusty and carnal and really intense in its sexuality, really wild, let's say, is not better or worse or less spiritual or whatever than something that's very, very sort of gentle and ethereal and very, you know, what it expresses of sexuality is quite sort of subtle, even. So no better or worse there. It's really what's the intelligence of this image and can I just play with the idea of trusting that, assuming that there is an intelligence there and going with it and seeing that in the specificity that's offered, that the image offers.

So just to give you a sense of the range here. An image, meditating quite some years ago, and just a couple – I didn't quite know who the couple was. And they're just in a sort of path in a forest, and all that's happening is they're holding hands. And it's a relatively brief image, but there was something in the holding hands. There was eros there in the hands. It was – I can't remember, let's see – yeah, it wasn't so much that the bodies were subtle; I think they were just fleshy bodies. But there was something very subtle in what was passing between them, let's say, in the erotic movement through the handholding. It was very, very subtle. Certainly not x-rated, you know. It's like really, really subtle. This is an erotic imaginal image, okay? Didn't have – it wasn't particularly insubstantial, but it was very subtle and very kind of gentle. There was something about tenderness, lovely, that was actually really palpable, the love, the softness, the tenderness that passed between them through, if you like, the handholding. So really, you know, almost one could neglect it as an image. But I want to give you a sense of the range and this sense of really trusting the intelligence and the specificity of the image. So it might be something like holding hands. And notice in this case it wasn't even that I was involved. I was witnessing another couple.

Then another image might be, or kind of erotic image, might be – again this is an image that came to me – it was kind of like a celestial wedding. That's the sense of it that I saw. And again, there was a couple there. It was like I was witnessing something. And this couple were sort of dancing with each other in sort of almost like a formulaic ritual way, and there were kind of columns with garlands around them, and they were dancing in and out of the columns, and again touching hands and holding hands. The whole thing had this very light quality, but something really delicate and beautiful and celebratory, like I was witnessing this union, almost like at another level, a celestial union. And the whole thing felt very light. It was very luminous and very light as in not heavy as well, but it wasn't particularly insubstantial in the sense they were flesh and blood bodies, this couple, this bridal couple, and not sort of bodies of light.

And actually something similar I remember. Maybe I'll tell this one in a bit more detail. The reason for telling all these is just because of what they might give examples of that will help you in your practice. So I'll give this one in a bit more detail. I sat down to meditate one day, a couple of years ago I think it was. And there was actually a lot of distraction, distracting images – that's right, I'd seen a movie the night before, I cannot remember what, and was just noticing, oh, yeah, you see a movie and the images from the movie stay in the mind and they kind of dominate for a while, for a day or two even, especially if you don't see many movies like I don't. So it was taking a while to sort of start and kind of filter, "Does that have this imaginal sense to it, or has the mind just kind of been impressed upon by something?" Now, it could be that an image from a movie becomes imaginal for me. Certainly that happens many times. Or an image, a character in a book becomes imaginal for me. So it's not that a priori an image from a movie is not to be followed. But there was a sense, just kind of like feeling the waters, fishing around a bit, what's kind of genuinely imaginal here, has that quality to it that I might actually tune in on.

Then actually – I don't know how long, a little time it took the mind to sort of settle with that. And then an image that I'd actually had before, it was quite a common one for me, of a young man, relatively young man, alone in a prison cell. There's a sort of spiraling stone staircase down into a dark cellar, and that's his prison cell. I can see that – I'm sort of traveling down that staircase to where he is in his prison cell, and there's a tiger that appears beside me and beside that young man. So I'm somehow moving in and out of identifying with him. At this point I'm just finding my way into the image. And the tiger, too, was a very common image for me at that time. And this tiger has a very powerful, very kind of calm and silent energy to it, with immense power.

So I descend into this cellar and I notice that actually the top of the stairs admit light. So this is interesting. I look up and I think it's actually open. So this is doubly interesting – the prison is somehow actually optional. And as I go kind of into the cellar, I see that it's peopled – there are various characters there. It's not just this young man. There's a sort of wizard character who I think I'd, again, a

character that I'd encountered before, with certain characteristics we don't need to go into here. And there's also a kind of beautiful lady in white, again a character with other characteristics we don't need to go into here. So interestingly – and again, I'm still describing how I'm getting into the image; I'm still not sure what to focus on here. And I focus on her for a while, and her appearance keeps changing as I focus on, and kind of mixing with images from the film that I saw. And then doubt arises. I'm not sure is this right, what's happening. So I'm describing all this just to – we're going to talk about practice of course and doubt and all that, but just kind of, in a way, to paint a picture of what actually happens.

So what I did at that point was I went a little deeper into the sense of *samadhi* in the energy body. Remember, all this is connected with that. So okay, the mind can't really settle here on what to connect with as an image, so let's just go deeper into the *samadhi* sense and feel the subtle body, the energy body. And in doing that, sometimes what can happen with the energy body, and maybe it happens with some people more than others, it's as if the energy body sort of begins to float free of the physical body. So this is not anything at all to do with being disconnected from the body – there's still this real sense of being really intimate with the feeling in the body, but it's as if the subtle body floats free and sort of flies free of the body. You can feel it flying and oftentimes for me it wants to turn cartwheels or somersaults; there's a kind of exuberant joy in it.

So I can really feel that very palpably in the energy field of the body, and I also see it, and it's kind of blue and a kind of white-yellow light. And it feels really good, and joy arises with that. So sometimes for some people it's related to, a possibility that arises, with a certain amount of *samadhi*. This feels good and joy arises with it, and then it's almost like I'm seeing this subtle-bodied angel, if you like, but I'm no longer really identifying so much. There's a kind of – definitely not 100% am this subtle-bodied angel. This subtle-bodied angel and the beautiful woman who was there, and she also now has a more subtle body of light. So what happened, as I went into the energy body, more *samadhi*, followed this energy body movement, it started to change the image. There's that dependent arising, mutual dependent arising of energy body, mind-state and image, and we're acknowledging all that.

But this subtle-bodied angel and the beautiful woman with the body of light, they start to dance. But dance is really...it's sort of the best I can do as a word for what they're doing. They're somehow floating and interacting with each other in such a sort of movement of delight. There's so much delight and mutual sort of sympathy and resonance in the way their movements kind of reflect and respond to each other and work together. It's, yeah, very hard to describe in words, but they were full of delight, and the whole scene was full of delight, and it delighted me. There was a lot of joy in this. Also want to mention that as this was happening, the thinking mind started sort of flashing lots of insights very, very quickly and intuitively. It wasn't, like, pondering something, just lots of very quick flashes of intuitive insight around cosmopoesis and other stuff. This was quite a few years ago and I was still developing this material and things were occurring to me. Note also there that there's a way that the thinking mind can be drawn into this process in really quite a creative way as part of this.

Now, the whole thing, I'm witnessing this erotic interaction, this intercourse in the widest possible sense, but it's really not raunchy sexual at all; it's very ethereal for a start, and what they're really doing is just moving in this way together, dancing if you call it that, in these sort of bodies of light. And it really feels like a vision of another realm where these two, this couple, are somehow eternally in this erotic dance together. So somehow I'm sort of, if you like, given a vision or an opening into this other realm, and that's what it feels like. When I, in the meditation, as it was going on over quite a little while, when I feel like I'm losing touch with that world, I just, "Oh, it's kind of going a bit," so I went back to this subtle body sense of feeling like the subtle body was flying, the actual feeling of that, and turning cartwheels and floating and really feeling how that feels. And again, that feeling in the energy body, very palpable, very lovely and enjoyable, helped me to access that kind of realm or world again, the vision of that.

So yes, imagining, if you like, the subtle body floating and flying through the air of the room, because then I could also kind of transport it from that cellar to the room that I was in, the room at Gaia House, and imagining the subtle body, that I'm feeling it, so image and energy body interacting there, and allowed that whole sense to come back, that whole image to open up again, of the couple. Just tracing that again as an example, very insubstantial, if we go back to this range of what's possible. Insubstantial. What can we say? Sexual, yeah, but a very gentle way, you know, and really not – certainly not obviously genital or even anything like that. Many times, you know, sitting in meditation, and it's as if a deva or a dakini or an angel comes and kisses me on the heart. This has a really healing, soothing effect. Very beautiful, very delicate, very loving. But so specific in the qualities of this angel and the way the kiss is given and the effect, its ripple through the energy body, sometimes very characterized by tenderness or by humor or by mischievous playfulness and sort of seductive quality or whatever. But so many possibilities in the specificity. The range is huge.

Or you might get an image from – you may know this Tibetan word, *yab-yum*, the sort of icons of buddhas in erotic union, in sexual union with their consorts. You get a different buddha with his specific consort, the consort with the buddha in erotic union, right at the center of a mandala or a thangka or whatever. So that would be quite a common image to arise in meditation. Again, who is it? Who is it who's involved? What's the characteristics of that *yab-yum*, of that penetration, of that opening? It may well be a melting, there is in that melting, maybe characterized by a lot of tenderness that goes with the melting, or tenderness melts together. It may be that it starts insubstantial, becomes insubstantial, just melts into light, that what started as two figures just becomes a melting into some color of light, and the figures and their independence and their forms are dissolved in that light. So all kinds of possibilities here.

It may be, you know, that there are images and imaginal senses of different kinds, involving the different imaginal senses, of penetration. So sexual penetration, actually all kinds of – let's say erotic penetration, because it can even be penetration through the gaze, and this is something we'll come back to. What is it to feel penetrated by the gaze of an imaginal figure? What is it to feel their gaze penetrating you in the erotic union that's through the gaze? But there can be all kinds of penetration, all different ways, and they don't at all need to correspond to or even at all be constrained by any kind of anatomical, biological accuracy. You or an imaginal figure might, for instance, have five penises, for example. There's a statue of Hermes that I saw somewhere that indeed had five penises. You can penetrate or feel penetrated in more than one place at the same time, something that's obviously not biologically possible, maybe in the middle of your head or the middle of the imaginal figure's head, or in through the front of the throat. Or it can feel or seem in different ways, again, different senses involved, that the whole body is being penetrated. Again, it doesn't make biological, anatomical sense.

There can certainly be gender reversal. So I'm used to thinking of myself as a man or a woman or something else I define myself as, but there's no constraint or stasis necessarily in terms of gender identities in the imaginal realm. And even with gender, there's no necessarily clear visual sense that corresponds to gender necessarily. There might be and there might not be. Penetration, as I said, might have more to do with energy penetrating – *might*. It might not be; it might be very carnal, very physical, and very conforming to human anatomy. Might. Certainly homoerotic. The range is enormous. It could be a penetration of being, beingness, you know? What's that? The imaginal is not, as I said, constrained to any kind of gender identity that we're used to. Could be hermaphroditic, you know. The sexual orientations that we're usually identified with, if we are identified, that holds no sway in the imaginal realm. There's some other intelligence operating that, if you like, just breaks that open, doesn't feel limited, is not limited by that.

So there's all these possibilities. Let me describe another one. Some of these images actually, and this one in particular, it has a slightly different context. So there's bits that I'll leave out, and bits that kind of have connotations that won't be clear from what I'm saying. But I think for the purposes of right now, it serves. So I'm in meditation and I see myself or I feel myself on a large raft. There's a

whole kind of cast of other characters on this raft with me, a large, wooden, flat raft that's on the sea and kind of drifting on the sea. Some of the characters are familiar from other images I had worked with in the past, that had sort of come and visited me, and some were completely new, didn't recognize them from before. Some of them were very clear, and some were just vague presences, I couldn't even quite get a sense of them or picture of them or any other sense of them.

Not only that, at first the number of figures there – there's clearly quite a few of them, but exactly how many, that seemed to be changeable more or less, and not even necessarily a finite number potentially. And the individuals themselves could change; they hadn't kind of settled down. And then it seemed like, suddenly it seemed like the raft was like a theatre stage, and it was being lit up. So it was on the ocean, this big, flat, wooden raft, being lit up, this that was now felt like a theatre stage, being lit up by sort of intense flashes of lightning, very sort of dramatic lightning coming from the heavens as if from God or something. So that this stage, this theatre stage, was illumined, illuminated by the lightning, this period lightning, whereas the water around it was not. So the water around it was black, dark. And suddenly with all that, tremendous energy with the image, shoots of energy. And then on this raft, on this theatre stage at sea, illuminated by the lightning, a rite begins. And there's a woman there. She's mostly naked. A kind of dark woman, mostly naked, but her body, her mostly naked body, is daubed in splashes and strokes of kind of black paint or tar or something. And she has amulets around her upper arms. And she's full of vital energy and force. She's exuding this vital energy and force.

And a rite begins between her and me. It's watched by the other characters. So it's as if they form a circle, watching this rite. And what happens in the rite, unlike some rites, is not formulaic. It's more improvised. And it's part dance and part sex, basically, and part what I would describe as different acts of union. There's a lot of energy involved, and the energy is quite, if you like, dark and powerful, but I don't mean by dark *evil*. We've been through this, I think, in the *Re-enchanting* retreat and possibly other retreats. Dark in my language is not evil at all, as most people tend to think in terms of certain archetypes. She's a dark goddess, and it's very, very beautiful, but she's not someone like Kali who's a sort of overwhelming, primordial, destructive force of nature. She's very powerful, and she's a dark goddess, but it's not that kind of completely decimatingly destructive force that I think goes with the goddess Kali, although I'm not quite sure of that iconography and all that.

Now, in this rite, part of what we do, this dark goddess and I, is – I don't know if you ever did this; maybe it's a weird thing. When I was a kid, we had two friends, me and my brother had two friends who lived just up the street, and we must have been, I don't know, seven, I'm guessing. Something like that. And I don't know where we got the idea from – maybe it was from, like, a TV show or something. Anyway. We cut our arms just a little bit so that they bled a little bit, and then we pressed the two bleeding arms together, me and my friend, so that we would be blood brothers. I don't know – have you heard of this? I honestly can't remember where we got it from, but it must have been some TV thing or something like that. And what that was was really, for us, back then when we were kids, it was symbolic of our friendship and our kind of commitment. I felt I really loved these guys and we were buddies and we were always out on the street playing or riding to the park and stuff, and it was kind of like symbolic of our deep commitment to each other as friends.

So that's part of what happens in this rite with this dark goddess on the raft, is we cut our arms and we press the bleeding parts together to become blood friends, if you like, or related. It's a symbol of our deep commitment to each other and commitment to something – I'm not even quite sure in the image what. This image was something I returned to a few times, and I was experimenting at the time with the whole notion of pacing with images, like when to return, when to deliberately return to a certain element of it, when to just move on to another image, et cetera. I think, I hope I talked about that in past retreats. And when I returned to it at some stage later, either the next day or later that day, I can't remember, we do this rite again, and her blood is actually black. She has black blood. And I receive this black blood of hers into my veins. Then I went out for some walking meditation – I was on

retreat at the time – and this kind of infusion of her black blood into my veins just filled my whole body with tremendous energy.

But more than that, it's like, as I was walking, it felt like that same energy, that same black blood energy, was suffusing into my body as I was walking in the walking meditation, from nature. So she was somehow a nature goddess, and I could actually feel this in-surge of energy, this black blood in-surge from nature, suffusing my whole body, my whole energy body. And in doing that – so I'm walking up and down, stopping and standing and walking, and being with this image in my walking meditation very mindfully – that infusion into the energy body, I actually, my imaginal sense of my body and the earth transformed as well through that infusion. So my energy body became a dancing god, like very sort of thickset, heavy, muscular, quite a different body than I have in this life at least. This god and my energy body – and I was still, but the energy body was dancing a sort of really energetic, powerful dance, a bit like what I know of the *haka*, you know, in New Zealand, the All Blacks rugby team and the dance they do trying to intimidate their opposing team before they start. It's fabulous.

So something like that, that sort of dance, was moving through my energy body and my imagination while the actual physical body was still. We've talked about these kind of possibilities in imaginal practice before. Other times, going back to this thread of the image that had to do with the blood mixing, other times this mixing of blood was much more gentle in terms of what it opened up. As the blood mixed, it became this merging of beings in really profound, beautiful love, and a kind of softly ecstatic union. So the very same thread of the image felt very different at different times, gave rise to a different trajectory of image within the larger image. But also at other times – this is all in the same sort of constellation of image on the raft in this rite – the rite, also, this erotic rite between the dark goddess and myself, involved dismembering each other, ripping each other or chopping each other's limbs, all the limbs, chopping them off the other. So she would do that to me, I would do that to her; it doesn't obviously make sense anatomically, physically. Chopping all the limbs of the other off the other, and chopping their body in pieces, and laying these out on the raft, these limbs and body pieces, and then smearing one's one body with the parts and the dismembered limbs of the other. So one's own body becomes daubed in the blood of the other. And then feasting, devouring the limbs and the flesh of the other.

Why am I saying all this? [laughs] To give you a sense of the range. Clearly that image, for a start, wasn't insubstantial at all. It was very substantial, very carnal, very intense, and for a lot of people, they think, "That just sounds weird or pathological" or whatever. But actually there was a lot that came out of that image, tremendous amount in fact, that I'm not going to go into now, infused with holiness, infused with beauty. Is it the standard kind of picture of holiness and beauty? No, it's not. Am I ever going to chop anyone up and do all that? [laughs] Of course I'm not. But really what I want to do is give you a sense of – the whole point of just these examples was to open up the sense of, as I said, the possible manifestations of eros, in this case of sexually erotic imagery, imaginal.

So we come back to this question. What does the image want? What does the image want? Can I trust, if you like, the integrity and intelligence of images? Or if I can even just grant them a little bit of trust, trusting their integrity, intelligence, what does that open up? What does that allow? What does that allow to unfold? What does that set in motion, if you like, through my trust? When I grant that and the image has this kind of iconic, timeless or eternal aspect, quality to it, dimension to it, all that and the trust allows the soulmaking. Yeah? This is part of what allows the soulmaking. So we're interested here in opening and allowing the eros so that the eros can open and allow the soulmaking and cosmopoesis and the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, everything that we're talking about.

Notice this granting of trust or this idea of the integrity and the intelligence of the image is a view, it's a way of looking, it's a concept, it's a logos, it's a conceptual framework. We're completely admitting that. It's part, as I said, of the dependent arising. It's part, if you like, of our intelligence, to bring it, to bring it to bear, to play with it, knowing it's just an idea and it will have an effect.

Sometimes that's quite a subtle point and it's hard for people to kind of get their heads around. But what happens in contrast if I reduce an image? "I just had that image because clearly I was traumatized or whatever from my past, or something like that. It's an expression of my past." Or I dismiss it, "Can't possibly be interesting. Or I'm lonely, therefore I see this couple holding hands," or whatever it is. If I reduce or dismiss it, what happens? Then I have a certain way of looking, I have a certain view, I have a certain concept, logos operating. What happens to the whole process? It just folds, usually, usually.

So again, there's dependent arising here. We're going to come back to this. What happens if I feel guilty, some kind of guilt from my upbringing or from other kinds of teachings I've received in different cultures, and I feel guilty about having a sexual image arise? That's actually interesting, what the effect of guilt – again, the guilt becomes a view, a lens, a way of looking, or part of the way of looking. There's a concept built into, "This is something that I should feel guilty of, that is bad." There's a conceptual framework. It's informing, it's shaping the way of looking and the view, and that affects what happens. Guilt's an interesting one because it could inhibit the movement, the soulmaking movement. Certainly inhibit the image, so we just shut it off or bring the mind back to the tip of the nose or whatever it is that we're doing or whatever, or a different so-called spiritual practice. Or bring it back to so-called reality or whatever. Or the guilt can – and I think I've talked about this before – shame and guilt can also propel something more, and they have their place in the mechanism of what propels addiction often. Often it's the shame and the seeing of something as bad that somehow it creates an energy that's intolerable, that propels the whole process, and I just repeat the addiction because of the shame, because of the intolerability of something. It's part of the whole cycle. I've talked about that before so I'm not going to dwell on it here.

But the question is, if I feel guilty, it's the opposite of trusting the intelligence of the image. What effect does that have on then what can or does unfold? And then there's the whole question, too, and we'll come back to this as well, of if there's a lot of energy, a lot of sexual energy or arousal, or sometimes just a lot of agitation anyway or stress, and then sometimes sexual fantasy or actual orgasm, et cetera, is – something in the being is just seeking to discharge energy. So we'll come back to that. But if that's what's propelling the whole movement, then it will go down a certain line and it will escalate, one thing leads to another. So there's a lot of different things that can come into how we're viewing the image at any time in terms of ideas, subtle ideas – sometimes we're not even conscious – or intentions or whatever, views, ways of looking, and this all has an impact. Yeah?

That's enough for now, but I want to really start to go into this eros-psyche-logos dynamic. When we can relate to the image in certain ways that allow that and how it spills over, as I mentioned, into the self image, the images of self that are operating, as well as of other and world in cosmopoiesis, et cetera, and other aspects of this organic movement of soulmaking. Okay?