

## Dilemmas and Delineations: How did we get here?! (Part 5)

**Rob Burbea**

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote a lot of things that were sort of addressed to himself, kind of advice to himself and notes to self. One of the things he wrote was, “All things have two handles; beware of the wrong one.” I think he – I’m not sure, but I think he might have been paraphrasing or even quoting the Greek philosopher Epictetus. But anyway. You can see how that applies to a lot of what we’ve been talking about so far. It’s relevant to desire, how we pick it up, by what handle, by what direction, to eros, to this whole notion of clinging, as we explained, that actually are we picking it up as a key or are we picking it up as just something to reject just at one level? It certainly applies to imagination and images in the conventional sense, two handles. Certainly also emptiness, and the Mahāyāna tradition makes this very clear. To grasp at emptiness in the wrong way is like grasping at a snake by the tail, the wrong end – its head is just going to come and bite you, with regard to emptiness. I think it was Nāgārjuna who wrote that.

All things have two handles. And also delineations – so how we relate to the very process of generating and making delineations, either in perception or in conception or both. So it applies to all this. Now, what that little aphorism – I think it’s not *just* saying you can pick things up but don’t cling to them or don’t identify with them. Certainly that’s part of it, how we pick something up. Maybe it would be more accurate to say, “All things have many handles.” So there’s many ways this admonition to care how, from what direction, in what way we pick something up applies to all the things we’ve been talking about so far.

With desire and with eros, it’s true at a certain level to say it’s fire and one is playing with fire to play with these things, desire and eros. It’s true, and there’s heat there. But, you know, where would human beings be if certain experimentation with fire did not take place at some point? Yes, that asks for a lot. In other words, we need to take care. We need to have certain, perhaps, things in place – qualities, abilities in place. We’ve talked about this before. But yeah, in a way, we could say we’re playing with fire to a certain extent. That doesn’t always mean that the fire is raging; it’s not always that it’s super intense. To be intense, the eros is very intense, the desire is very intense, the fire is very intense – first of all, it won’t always be that way for anyone, and secondly, *intense* is neither better nor worse. So from one sort of standard perspective, intense desire – too simplistic – is a bad thing. From another perspective, again too simplistic, it’s a good thing; it’s better for it to be more intense, more fire.

But what this asks, this investigation into this, this exploration of this whole subject asks for a lot of sensitivity, the development of our sensitivity. I’ve touched on this in earlier teachings. It asks for a lot of subtlety in our attention, and subtlety of discernment, a very kind of keen, well-developed, sharp mindfulness, if you like; a very sensitive mindfulness, sometimes a very soft, delicate mindfulness. It asks for a certain adventurousness of spirit, we could say, to go down this avenue and see what happens and explore. It asks for a certain boldness, a certain freedom, we could say; freedom to question, boldness to question, to question boldly, and to experiment, to dare to experiment and find out. How will I find out? I have to experiment. If those things are in place, or we can bring them with us, or we can develop them as we go, all of that, then this exploration, I would say, can open up for us radical possibilities, radical openings, radical shifts in our understanding, our senses – as I said before, our sense of the self, of other, of soul, of imagination, of world, of cosmos, of existence. Real revolutions are possible here for us.

So the potential with an exploration of eros is huge, huge and profound, wide and profound. And we’re talking about something that, if you like, is a formidable force. That doesn’t always mean it’s intense. Sometimes Cupid – that’s the name, as you probably know, the Latin, the Roman name for the god Eros – some sort of artistic or statuesque depictions of Cupid are of this little sort of podgy little cherubic baby angel with sort of soft, rolling, pinkish, smooth flesh, and maybe he’s slightly

mischievous with his bow and arrow and who he's going to shoot and kind of do the matchmaking thing. That's kind of all a little bit cutesy. Compare that, for example, with Plato's description – actually the words are put into the mouth of Diotima, who was a kind of mysterious seeress and philosopher, and her characterization of Eros. I got this from a philosopher called Gerald Bruns, and a literary critic. Diotima characterizes Eros as a hermeneutical daimon. Okay, what does that mean? *Hermeneutics* is interpretations, so his business is the interpretation of all things, all things. Eros has something to do with the way we see them and open up and see them as messages, as angels. *Daimon* is, you could say, another word for a demi-god or an angel or something like that – something given more than a purely personal or purely reductive existence and significance.

So “Eros is a hermeneutical daimon who shuttles back and forth between gods and men,” gods and humanity, human beings, “between being and nothingness, between what is real and less real, between wisdom and ignorance.” This Eros “looks just like Socrates, which is to say shoeless, ugly, impoverished, cunning in pursuit of the beautiful and the good, a lover of wisdom, and a master of jugglery, witchcraft and artful speech.” I don't know if you can – I hope, if that's not kind of evident to you now, just how powerful and well-captured that description is, how much it points to, the kind of accuracy and what it brings in to involve there. A hermeneutical daimon shuffling back and forth between the divine and the human, between what is real and what is less real, between wisdom and ignorance, shoeless himself, ugly, always poor. Himself has nothing. Do you get this, even in terms of what we've described so far about eros itself has nothing? Cunning in pursuit of the beautiful and the good, yes? A lover of wisdom, of insight, and a master of jugglery, witchcraft and artful speech. So his mastery, his realm, his art, is the realm of art. It's not the realm of realist truth in the way that we tend to think about it. There's a lot in that. Very beautiful, and certainly not a little cutesy description there. We're really talking about something bigger than us, because divine.

[10:20] Now, we said already, we gave a kind of small start of a definition, if you like, of what eros is. But we also said when we talk about this eros-psyche-logos dynamic, or rather what instigates, inflames, invokes, elicits, puts in motion because of its wanting more in terms of the ways it expands, enriches, deepens, widens, complexifies, gives dimension to the images that it beholds of its erotic object, its erotic object as image, in imaginal dimensions, and the ideas, the logoi, the concept of that erotic object – because of all that, the definition that we gave earlier, this wanting more contact, connection, intimacy, knowing, to know more, wanting more penetration, to penetrate more, to experience more, et cetera, all that, that provisional definition is exactly that, just provisional.

So we can almost make a kind of axiomatic statement, a kind of fundamental statement that because eros is not separate from this whole eros-psyche-logos dynamic and what that does in its expansion, I'm going to say we can never totally understand eros. There will always be something of it, something of eros beyond our grasp, beyond the grasp of our understanding, and therefore, also maybe something of it to which we are always subject. Because it's more than we can get a full handle on, get our hands around, there may be something of eros to which we are always subject. We never feel like we've got it under our thumb. We never – it's always, in some sense, bigger than us, bigger than our minds, bigger than our capacities, in some sense. Now, this, of course, goes back to that whole origin, if you like, of the whole idea of Eros as a divinity, which is something Jung restated, which implies the impossibility of a full definition, of capturing it conceptually.

But also we can see, if we think about the implications of this whole idea that eros opens up and inseminates and fertilizes psyche and logos, which then further inflame and inseminate the eros, we can see that eros kind of has this tendency, because of the pothos in it, to keep expanding everything or shattering boundaries or stretching boundaries. Whether that's an imaginal figure, or a lover, the way I see him/her, whatever it is, whether it's a piece of art, or a piece of music, or an artist, or whatever it is, that's my imaginal perceptual object, and eros will tend to expand, will want to, will naturally expand, open, deepen, complexify, et cetera, everything – the object and everything it's in relation to. But also because eros itself is tied up in the larger definition with the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, it means that

eros itself also gets expanded.

This happens in two ways. It happens, as I said, because when the imaginal object becomes even richer, even deeper in its dimensions, even more wonderful, like a jewel revealing more and more sparkling facets and unknown wonders and mysteries, and becomes more rich, more deep, more wide, then there is more eros. There is more eros, more to penetrate. I desire, the eros desires, to penetrate to what I'm now discovering, and desires to open to what it's now discovering of the erotic imaginal other. I see more there. He/she is more. I want to open to, I want to penetrate that. Eros wants to. So the eros itself swells. There's a tumescence, there's an increase, there's an empowerment. The degree of the fire, if you like, grows; the amount, the range, et cetera, of the eros. But in a second, way, too, because in all this, the image and the idea – the psyche and the logos of the eros; in other words, what is the image that is present of the very eros that's involved in this whole movement?

So certainly there's an image of the other and the imaginal other, and that's getting richer and wider, but then this spreads. We're going to go into this in more detail and all its implications. It spreads to self-reflect in this kind of autoeroticism – I'll say more about that in talks to come – so that the very way that eros is regarded, the very image of eros and the very idea, the logos of the eros in the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, not just to the object but also the eros, those boundaries, too, start to stretch or start to shatter and then have to reform in a wider, deeper, more spacious and generous and multidimensional way. So whatever ideas and images are involved with the eros, the psyche and the logos of the eros, so to speak, those, too, are expanded. Do you understand? So eros, whatever our notion, whatever our image or fantasy of eros is, that, too, keeps growing, gaining new dimensions, just by virtue of what eros does and is and the whole eros-psyche-logos dynamic.

The eros, too, as I said, starts to take on new dimensions, other facets of the eros itself, other resonances, other breadths that it encompasses, et cetera, and reveals, or that we discover in eros itself. Now, this doesn't mean, this does *not* imply – the fact that we can never totally understand it because of all of what I just said, we can never totally understand eros – that we shouldn't explore it, that we should say, "Ah, okay, well, there's no point exploring it, or no point even trying to create ideas and concepts that address it, that support our exploration." It doesn't imply that we should stop trying for our exploration and inquires to go further, to go deeper, to go wider into the breadth of eros. Actually, to me, it should inspire a greater inquiry and exploration. Wherever we are in our understanding of eros, or wherever we are if we're building a concept or conceptual framework of eros and adding to it, wherever we are in that process, there's more. There's more to discover. There's more to add here. There's more to find out. There's beauties and wonders and depths and dimensions to be revealed. So it should inspire, rather than feeling frustrated because it's like, "I don't really get this yet," or "I haven't sussed out, I haven't encapsulated it, I haven't figured it out." Even as I alluded to before, it could, hopefully, even give us a sense of okayness and perhaps even rightness, those times when we feel driven or dragged by eros, and the eros seems as if it's bigger than us or bigger than what we can figure out or encapsulate in concepts or even in an image. There we recognize that not only is that okay, there's maybe even a profound rightness in that.

[19:18] So I don't know. Maybe you've been listening so far to the talks here, and maybe – I can say this for myself – leaning a little bit into trying to be a bit more precise and a bit more analytical about delineating between different concepts and qualities that we recognize when eros is present, and how we delineate it from this and that, and... and maybe some of you are listening and actually, perhaps, starting to feel a little uneasy at times, because maybe feeling as if we're being too precise and too analytical. I have felt that at times just in the material that we've covered so far on this retreat. I'm not sure. Is the precision and analysis that we're bringing to bear, at times is it, when is it, overstepping its soulmaking function, gone beyond its function, its support of soulmaking? When does precision and analysis, in this case – because what we're interested in is soulmaking. That's what we're interested in. When has actually the way that we're delineating things and with precision and making some analysis of how things relate and processes, et cetera, when does that overstep its soulmaking function? It's not

an easy question.

On the one hand, you've got this notion that eros is divine, and the fact that because of the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, the kind of tendency of stimulating, inflaming, expanding, inseminating, fertilizing tendency of eros that it gives to eros, psyche, and logos, and more as we'll explain in later talks, because of the divinity and because of that eros-psyche-logos dynamic there's always going to be something mysterious retained about eros, something unfathomable, some sense of more – more that I haven't quite discovered, more to it, more dimensions to it. So on the one hand, all of that – this unfathomability, if you like. And, at the same time, on the other hand, a certain amount of delineating, of defining, of highlighting of features, actually *serves* the movement of eros and the soulmaking process. So right here in relation to delineations and definitions, we have a dilemma. We have actually several dilemmas, but that's one of them.

There is, on the one hand, in approaching soulmaking, in approaching things like eros, oftentimes what's more helpful – and I've talked about this before and leaned that way at different times in both teachings and writings – is leaning more towards the poetic and the mythical sense, a poetic understanding, poetic depiction, poetic presentation or unfolding that calls on the poetics of our understanding, and a more poetic understanding, a more poetic diction, a more mythical sensibility in exploring and receiving, in digesting, et cetera. And when to emphasize that, how much to emphasize that, relative to a more analytical. I don't know, so far on this retreat, it seems to me that we've been leaning more towards the analytical. In the past and in other stuff I'm working on right now, more the other way. Both. So there's a kind of dilemma here, balance. I don't know, different people, different times, same person. But that's something to bear in mind about all this, about making delineations here.

Actually, I want to say something general, make some general observations, say some general things about making delineations in general. In fact, I want to add to that and also say some general things about saying general things, if you follow me. So general observations about making delineations, and general things about saying general things. Now, I'm aware, some of you might be like, "What? This is really abstract now." And it might – I don't know, if you're listening, whether this just sounds like really not relevant, or pretty vague, or just kind of abstract, or just like "hrrm." Maybe in time, maybe in time, hopefully, it will come to seem more relevant, why I'm sort of saying these things now generally about making delineations and about different levels of insight. I hope that it does make sense at some point and seem both very relevant and quite important.

It's interesting, just in terms of sort of insights that can sound more abstract, or that are more general, that apply more generally, or that operate at a kind of higher meta-level, is that they can sound kind of vague – so much so that we barely hear them or they make very little impression. For many people, it's like they don't really recognize the value when they hear or read something at that level, or they sort of get it, but not really. They don't really get the way sometimes these sort of meta-level insights can have, because of their generality, have this really pervasive power. They're general, but they generate an enormous amount of other insights. They link things together, make certain ways of proceeding open, certain whole avenues – not just a little nook and a crack here, but whole avenues. They generate a lot through their generality and their pervasiveness, and their sort of all-pervading applicability, and then their implications.

So oftentimes, you know, I might teach or something, and many people remember a story that I told, or a certain image recounted. It strikes, it stays in the memory, makes an impression immediately. This is very, I think, probably normal for the ways that most people tend to understand as human beings, take in information, written or listening, or when the advice or the insight seems very, very specific, when it's obviously relevant to a situation that I find myself in immediately. But actually there often is much greater power, as I said, much more far-reaching sort of embrace and influence and implication in a more general meta-level of insight, oftentimes.

So it seems also that it's quite rare, I think – it's a rare person who actually kind of has an ability to recognize a sort of relative hierarchy of significance of ideas or insights. Sometimes it's almost the

opposite; it's as if the more significant ones and the ones that are really radical (*radical* is from the word *radix*, meaning *root*), they really go to the root of things in their generality, in their power, in their implications, people have a hard time sort of recognizing what's a more radical, far-reaching, pervasive sort of meta-level insight and something that's much smaller, just because it seems immediately tangible and immediately obvious, immediately applicable to something that's right in front of me now in a very obvious way. So that's just the way most people's minds work. But in a way there's an encouragement there to try and reflect on this material, especially when it might seem a bit conceptual or that kind of level, in a way that starts to build something for you that's really helpful and will be really powerful and, as I said, radical and far-reaching in its implications.

[28:57] Because one of the things I wanted to say about delineations and making delineations is that, again, most – certainly not all, but a lot of people – appreciate clarity when they're reading something or hearing teachings or whatever. And it can *seem*, very easily, that something has been made clear to us if we are presented with, if we read or if we hear, kind of neat, well-delineated distinctions between things, between concepts, between qualities or factors of mind. Sometimes people say to me, "You're really clear and da-da-da..." So that is something that, you know, I do definitely try and do sometimes. I'm certainly not wanting to throw that out. This is where the dilemmas come in. I don't want to throw that out, and I'm certainly not advocating a kind of general sloppiness or inattention, and certainly not confusion. That's often not that helpful.

But I would say, or just kind of point out, that I think we should start to feel a little bit suspicious if the neat distinctions that we have made ourselves or that we have been presented with by a teacher or by a piece of writing or whatever it is – we should feel suspicious, our suspicion should be aroused, if those neat distinctions seem to be being regarded by anyone – whoever is presenting them or ourselves listening – as real. We should be suspicious if these distinctions are presented as delineating real things, as accurately and simply reflecting the reality of things. If we sense that a person is or we ourselves are kind of slipping into that very common assumption and position, then I think our suspicion should be aroused. If we suspect that someone or we ourselves are clinging to these distinctions or these things that are delineated through distinctions and definitions, if we suspect they are being clung to as real – remember, that's a form of *avijjā*; that's ignorance at the deepest level – if they're clung to as real or as reflecting simply, accurately, the reality of things, we should be suspicious.

In the Buddhadharma, especially in the Mahāyāna, this is made really, really clear: those links of dependent origination, they are not real. All Dharma concepts, they're just ways of looking. They're just ways of dividing things. They don't reflect reality. They're ways of looking, ways of delineating, in the service of something. So I would say, along with the Buddha – why did he say after his enlightenment, "It's hard to understand, this dependent origination that I've discovered. Hard to understand, subtle, profound, only the wise can see it," et cetera? Very famous quote. "I'm not sure whether I want to even try teaching this." There's a whole structure of concepts that he's not saying, "This is reality," he's saying, "Look this way and you'll understand something about reality." Eventually – I think I've said this already on this retreat – the very insight that's generated by the structure of the delineations of dependent origination, those links, et cetera, if we approach it the right way, melts those very delineations and distinctions, melts the very links so that the whole thing is like a snake eating its own tail, swallowing its own tail; the whole thing dissolves.

So the question is how to move. I don't just shrug and say, "Ah, yeah, no concepts." If I just shrug and say all concepts are false, I'm just left with my default concepts. I haven't gone anywhere. All I've done is probably reinforced a little bit of laziness and sloppiness. How do I actually get *from* delineations *through* those delineations into a much more profound realization, much more profound freedom, and even beyond those delineations? So that's definitely there in Dharma teachings. The question is, exactly how can I approach these teachings in ways that do that? That's where I go back to the idea of ways of looking, fabrication, et cetera. For me, that's a very powerful way.

But that insight about the suspicion of neat distinctions is there in Western philosophy as well, even back to Plato. He used to make fun of certain characters who were so fond of making these distinctions very clear, very neat, and they'd get kind of ridiculed a little bit in his dialogues. Hegel, as well, another one who gets a lot of stick, but actually partly his extraordinary insight was that any belief in clear concepts, as if they reflect reality, just doesn't stand scrutiny. As you look at it, bring more investigation to bear, you see it involves its opposite, it doesn't hold, the boundaries fracture, et cetera. We can see this in our own practice just as the mindfulness gets keener, more subtle, sharper, more sensitive. As our investigation gets deeper, more directed, more cunning, if you like, and as our insight grows, we will witness this, too, in our very own experience.

So just for example, at first the *vedanā* (the pleasant, unpleasant, or what some people call neutral – neither pleasant nor unpleasant), the three categories of *vedanā*, and the distinction between *vedanā*, say, and craving – here's this pleasant feeling, and then there's the craving to get more of it or to move towards it or to hang onto it or whatever, or here's this unpleasant, and the craving to push it away, to get rid of it, to reduce it, whatever. It seems like the *vedanā* and the craving are two different things. It's very important to delineate two different things and actually see in our experience, "Yes, here's two different things. I can see A and I can see B." I then see their relationship.

As I go deeper in insight, that very distinction starts to blur, and we start to see it's a kind of illusory distinction. No *vedanā*, no craving; no craving, no *vedanā*. Craving and *vedanā* are inseparable, as are craving and clinging – we touched on that before – and as are *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra* at a very deep level, as are, in fact, all of the five aggregates, also the mental aggregates. Perception and consciousness, they are not two separate things. They're divided up in terms of the aggregates, the third and the fifth aggregate. They are *not* separate. Perception and *vedanā* are not separate. Perception, *vedanā*, and consciousness are not separate. The aggregates are not referring to separate or separable things. They're not real, distinct entities. The delineations are made to serve a certain purpose, but they are not reflective of reality. We can see that in any domain, and certainly with Dharma concepts. So that's another dilemma regarding making delineations, in terms of clarity and the illusions of clarity or the seduction of what seems like clarity.

There's another potential pitfall or danger, making delineations. As I mentioned earlier, when we delineate something like eros from desire or craving or whatever it is, in doing that, we amplify something. We amplify a thing through a distinction, distinguishing it from other things. So we're delineating a theme, or an area, or a quality, or whatever. In a way, we're creating it – in a way. We're discovering it and we're creating it. We'll come back to this create/discover sort of amalgam or duality later. But in a way, we're actually creating something for our experience and reflection. And then we've got this thing called eros. In relation to that area of experience or that theme of eros, it's possible that it becomes an area where we then pass judgment on ourselves. So here I've created this thing, we've created this thing, whatever it is. We create something called *samādhī*, and then lo and behold, we start measuring where we are in relationship to our *samādhī*, or our insight, or liberation, or eros, or whatever it is.

In a way, I think – I'm not sure if he actually said this, but in a way, it comes out of some of the insights of Michel Foucault, in regard, let's say, to sexuality, in fact. He pointed out in his sort of archeology of the history of the whole sense and idea of sexuality that you can trace it back and, in a way, how much more defined and complex and solidified and prominent it is as a concept now, to which the sense of self then relates itself or attaches itself. In other words, over the past several hundred years, two things have grown, and they've grown together: one is the sense of sexuality, or sexuality as a sort of theme of human psychology, of human behavior, of human being, and with that – not *just* dependent on that, but with that – also the whole idea of individuality, self, and identity, which as I mentioned before is a lot different now in the kinds of interiority and the prominence of individuality than it was, let's say, several hundred years ago in Europe.

So sexuality becomes this thing and this area where my identity and the measurement of my

identity is so often wrapped up – oftentimes in not a very simple way, and also quite a painful way because of judgmentalism and actually a lot of ignorance and not knowing. My identity is wrapped up with sexuality, and sexuality is wrapped up with my identity and individuality, and what’s my sexual expression, and how am I presenting myself sexually, and how am I in bed, and da-da-da-da-da. So there’s a lot of potential and beauty that comes out of that, and there’s a kind of danger there. As I said, we bring forth eros, or we create eros, if you like, as a theme, we amplify it as a theme, and then with that, if we explore, then we have a ton of questions in our exploration like I threw out – how then do we keep eros alive, which is different than *mettā*? How do we keep eros alive in a long-term relationship? But we need to be careful with all this because, as I said, we might be creating another area in which to judge ourselves. So, “I’ve failed. I’m an erotic failure.” [laughs] Or, “My relationship is a failure in terms of its eros.” “I should be this or that.” “It should be this or that.” “There’s something wrong with me.” “Is there something wrong with me?” “Everyone else, I bet, is...” whatever.

[42:26] You can see it, again, you can see it with *samādhi*, that most people – actually nowadays it’s more of an issue because there’s a kind of hype about attention and performance at work and productivity, so people really are into developing their cognitive functioning with different apps and all that sort of stuff. But, you know, generally speaking, unless someone’s really been exposed to a kind of teaching or retreat or situation where people are just really talking about being mindful, and being present, and not being distracted, and coming back, and staying steady, and *vitakka* and *vicāra*, then people really start to measure where they are with their *samādhi* and it becomes this thing that otherwise they wouldn’t even have given a second thought to, wouldn’t have made it a big deal or a painful thing in their life. So similar with eros. The distinction opens up a beautiful avenue, *and* it can become then something we unfortunately measure ourselves with. So, dilemma here. A double-edged sword. But creating/discovering is part of different themes, different areas, different dimensions of our being, of the being, of the other. This is a part of what the eros-psyche-logos dynamic does. We’ll come back to this. It does create/discover more and more. It creates and discovers more and more dimensions, more and more little cracks that open into areas, like I was saying, getting your foot in the door and then it opens to a whole avenue, distinctions, delineations are made, othernesses are made, all this. So it’s a double-edged sword. Beauty, soulmaking there, but a dilemma, or many dilemmas.

Sometimes people say pointing out the differences between different teachings, and also delineating concepts, creates dualities, creates otherness or othernesses. Pointing out the differences between different teachings, and delineating concepts, creates dualities and creates otherness. Now, that is true. And sometimes that even creates – let’s say this: it’s true, but it’s not always bad. Just the creation of duality in itself, or differentiations, or othernesses, is not necessarily always a bad thing that leads to *dukkha*. Again, careful of being too simple here. And, you know, even the different sort of schisms among, let’s say, psychoanalytic schools or psychotherapeutic schools, you know, you could say that’s terrible, and all the difficulty and the interpersonal difficulty and this and that that comes out of it. On the other hand, look at the richness that came out of it. Look at the creativity that comes with a schism. So it’s not only that it just simply leads to *dukkha*.

Even in Dharma practice you can see, going back to this idea of ways of looking, delineate between different ways of looking, really subtly different ways of looking, and you see – delineating between two ways of looking, whatever they are – one fabricates more *dukkha* and more perception, and one fabricates less. That brings me an insight, and it brings me more freedom, but it comes out of delineation. Duality is not a problem there; it’s actually something that really can be profoundly helpful, profoundly fruitful. If I make a delineation and then it brings some ease and some freedom and less fabrication, actually there’s the possibility there of then making even more refined delineations, even subtler delineations between concepts, et cetera, and degrees of clinging, et cetera, and getting even less fabricating – fabricating even less *dukkha*, fabricating even less perception, and the level of insight that can come out of that. We’ve explained this before. So it’s not just, “Oh, yeah, I find a way of being or a way of looking that kind of feels pretty groovy and pretty relaxed, and clearly there’s not

much suffering there, and then I just kind of kick back and relax, and without too much tightness surf in and out of that.” Great, but limited, okay?

The creation, if you like, or the creation/discovery of dualities, polarities, othernesses, is intrinsic to the erotic process, the process of eros-psyche-logos, intrinsic to the soulmaking dynamic. We’re going to explain more about this later because it’s quite important. Wrapped up in that is also complexity. When the eros-psyche-logos dynamic gets going, the imaginal object, the erotically charged other, the erotic beloved, gets complexified, complicated, in a good way. They’re like a jewel – you suddenly see, oh, look at that, it’s got even finer facets, et cetera, and the way it reflect the light in the different ways off the different facets. Its beauty is increased through its complication, its depth, that there’s more to discover there. So complexity also – not always, but also – is generally speaking, or rather on the whole, generated, created and discovered, through the soulmaking process. So again, I caution against this sort of addiction to simplicity, this simplistic addiction to simplicity, what I call simplism.

So the question is when to be simple, and when not to be simple. Or, actually, even more accurately, in *this* situation, what will a simple perspective give me, and what will a not-so-simple perspective give me? In this situation, what will a simple perspective give me, and what will a not-so-simple perspective give me? Where will it take me if I look in a way that simplifies, and if I look in a way that actually seems like it’s not so simple? And on the other hand, sometimes as human beings we’re listening to teachings or reading something, and either we do it or someone is kind of offering something to us, some distinction or other, and it actually doesn’t serve anything at all. So what’s the point of that distinction? It doesn’t free you in any way. It doesn’t bring any more freeing insight. It doesn’t open soulmaking. It’s just a kind of pedantry. So again, there’s a kind of insight in really, again, delineating what delineations are actually worth making. What are the particular results of making certain delineations? Which ones are just like, what’s the point of making them? It really doesn’t serve. They may sound clever or whatever, and it’s just a pedantry. So this is what I mean by a meta-level of insight. So actually learning how to look, how to create distinctions, when to pull back, what kind of distinctions, where each of them will take me, daring to find out and toss out the ones that are not helpful, and pursue the ones that, even though they seem quite tricky, I can sense there’s richness here, there’s treasure to be discovered of different kinds.

[51:04] For our purposes now on this retreat, primarily, it’s like, which distinctions bring soulmaking? When does a certain delineation increase, serve, support and nourish the soulmaking? For example, as we said, just the distinction between eros and greed is, to my mind – and I hope you will see – a distinction that helps soulmaking. I don’t just tip out eros because it’s a kind of desire, and desire, I’ve heard, is a bad thing and I’m trying to live without it, live without clinging, et cetera. We talked about that. But even the distinction, say, between joy and happiness. I would define them slightly differently sometimes to actually open up a difference there. Joy, I would say, is a kind of happiness that’s richer and deeper, if you like, in different ways. I’ll go into that another time.

Someone told me – this is secondhand, so I’m not sure if it’s true, but I’ve heard it – that in the Tibetan language there’s only two words for emotions: happy and sad. I’m still not sure whether I quite believe it, but apparently there’s just two words. Unlike English, it’s a very, very simple language. There’s two words for emotions, so you’re either happy or you’re sad. I’m guessing there’s a word for equanimity, because that’s a Buddhist word, but anyway. Happy and sad. Someone was telling me that they knew a Tibetan who then moved to the West and learned English. They were reporting after some years experiencing emotions, after they learned English, that they never knew that they had before. Is it that? That the language is highlighting something that was there anyway? Or is it that the language is actually creating new emotions, the very delineation creates something? Or both? I’d say it’s both, myself.

So this is interesting in its relevance to soulmaking and to fabrication. We can very easily believe or be taught that words are thoughts, and thoughts bring discriminations, and discriminations



have to do with *papañca*, they create *papañca*, so don't get entangled in words because they feed thoughts, which feed discrimination, which feeds *papañca*. There's a way that's true in the original meaning of – well, actually, there's a way that's *sometimes* true, if *papañca* and fabrication are equated, that delineations create fabrication sometimes. But it's also, as I said, that the word – say the different words for different emotions, subtle shades of emotion, the kinds of emotion – that actually the words serve to create delineations in our sensitivity, and refinements of our sensitivity, and this actually stimulates fabrication, a diversity of fabrication then. In the way a lot of psychoanalysts use the term *consciousness*, this then stimulates consciousness. We are then conscious of some arena more because we've been given a delineation that opens it up. And some of that increase in consciousness can be soulmaking. So the fabrication there can be, some of it, in the service – it's possible it can be in the service of soulmaking. New doors, new experiences, new understandings can be opened through making verbal delineations.

So again, the simplistic spiritual teaching about “get away from words” and “don't think” or “don't get attached,” it's appropriate sometimes, and like so many things, sometimes the very opposite is true – there will be more soulmaking, more of the eros-psyche-logos dynamic will be stimulated, through the delineations of words, through the magic of words. Sometimes there's that possibility. So regarding delineations, fabrication, and soulmaking, what can we say? Well, some delineations actually decrease fabrication. They support certain ways of looking which will actually fabricate way less than we could have without that delineation. Some delineations will actually increase fabrication, and actually create problems, or create subtleties of awareness, or whatever. The soulmaking could be in the greater fabrication, as we'll point out more and more on the retreat. Sometimes more fabrication means more soulmaking, or *skillful fabrication* is soulmaking. And sometimes there's an element of the soul, we could say, or a dimension of the soul, that the decrease of fabrication, the movement towards the Unfabricated and that spectrum there, is also soulmaking in a different way. So the relationship there – there's all the different permutations and possibilities in terms of making delineations, increase or decrease of fabrication, and serving or not serving soulmaking. It's not that simple, and it invites our investigation and our careful attention, and our intelligence.

Okay. Last thing. Why am I saying all this? [laughs] You might be wondering. Why am I saying all this? Well, because it will guide our work. A lot of this will guide our work, certain material that we're exploring together in this course. Certainly your practice, especially as it develops, you know, some of this will really guide that work and your thinking, and your thinking about these things, and your thinking about practice and how you approach practice. I'm saying some of it, also, really as a kind of – apologetic is the wrong word, but justification for what's being presented here and for this whole structure and integrated path and the introduction of new concepts, et cetera, that seem kind of unusual or really counter to what we might have heard before. So it's partly, yeah, I admit, it's a kind of feeling it might be important for some people to have that justification, to have it make sense.

But there's another reason I'm saying all this. In a way I'm saying it for – let's say for the future. What we're presenting here, and what we're going into here, and what we're kind of elaborating and building, if you like, and playing with, playing with building, in terms of concepts and practices and refinements of attention and all that, it's not a closed system. It might be integrated, and maybe it seems that way, but my hope is it's really not. I'm not talking about a closed system. My hope, or the invitation, really, is that as time goes on in the future, or very soon, or whenever, that you or some of you will feel like you want to or are called upon to add, to build, to what we're talking about here, and what we're sharing together here, and exploring, and experimenting with and presenting. So I'm saying this for the service of opening an avenue that no one owns, that other people can add to and build tributaries and other avenues that connect up, or make more lanes in the highway, or whatever the analogy would be, or a building that then is added to and given a whole extension or whatever it is.

I'm saying it for the sake of creativity. Because there's a whole other way – and I'm going to come back to this – there's a whole other way, a whole other dimension of practice, which has to do

with the creativity of one's practice, or the creativity of even making one's own practice, making one's own path, making one's own Dharma, creating/discovering one's own Dharma – the eros and the soulmaking of the creativity of Dharma, or Dharma as creativity. In other words, it's open. Do you understand what I'm saying? I know that sounds maybe like a big deal, and not everyone will feel called to that or attracted to it. But I'm saying this for the sake of an open, shared, creative project, so that if the time comes and you or indirectly someone wants to make further delineations, wants to make further definitions, wants to add to something, wants to question something, pull something apart, give it another level, et cetera, that all this generalities I've said about definitions and delineations and the dilemmas involved, all that applies to doing that – the erotics of an open, endless, creative path, an open, endless conception, and what is it to be wise, and creative, and insightful, and playful, and artistic – I'm not sure if those are the right words – in one's relationship to that. This is something we'll come back to, in terms of the relationship with the path in general, other dimensions. But hopefully that makes a little bit of sense. Maybe it will make the sense that it needs to in the places that it needs to.