

Eros Unfettered (Part 2)

Eros Unfettered Retreat

Rob Burbea

January 24, 2017

<https://dharmafeed.org/teacher/210/talk/40172/>

So I know it's a lot of material and a lot of detail as well sometimes, so just to state again the kind of larger trajectory or the part of the trajectory we're on at the moment, if you like. We are exploring and opening up the possible manifestations of eros, and its relation with the imaginal, and the whole breadth of what that means and can mean, and the ways it can arise. And as well as that, we are also looking at, investigating and explaining what eros, when it is opened, will open for us, open to us, and that's connected with our explanation of what we're calling the soulmaking dynamic, the eros-psyche-logos dynamic. So giving examples, and we'll move through quite a lot of different examples. Some of them are so-called purely intrapsychic, they may arise in formal meditation practice, and some relate to our perceptions in the world, of the world, of others, of self, of objects, et cetera. Some are sexual, some non-sexual. All are erotic. And in discussing the sexual, part of the objective of that is to open up the possible manifestations of eros, kind of legitimize, open wider what can be taken and used validly and powerfully as part of our practice.

So we said briefly that when this soulmaking dynamic is allowed, when the eros, psyche, and logos are allowed to inseminate each other, to grow, to expand, deepen, enrich, complicate each other in that way, then not just the erotic object, the beloved other, is amplified that way, extended that way, deepened, widened that way, but also the self, because as we said, subject and object, self and other, if we say, are always dependently arising together. So where there's an object, there's a subject. And if I'm focusing on an image or an imaginal perception of an other in my life, there is both the sense of them as other, as beloved other, but also the sense of self. But oftentimes we miss this. Or we don't allow the sense of the self, we don't allow the same soulmaking dynamic, the same movement and expansion and deepening of eros-psyche-logos in relation to the self as we do in relation to the other. We'll come back to this in terms of sort of diagnostics, if you like, things that can go wrong.

Actually we said also that what dependently arises, we could say for now, is not just this polarity of self and other, subject and object, but, if you like, a fourfold meeting, a fourfold co-constellation of self, other, world in general, and the eros. So that a particular kind of eros gives rise to a particular perception of other, of self, and of world at large, so to speak. And these four, self, other, world and eros, co-constellate. They're mutually dependent. They're almost like facets of the same whole structure or constellation or soulmaking snapshot, if you like...that's really the wrong word, snapshot, but soulmaking constellation.

So this means that we begin to perceive ourselves imaginally. We begin to see and feel and sense our self as image, the imaginal dimensions of our self. And then moving in our life, we feel that self, gradually, more and more, to have more dimensions to it. We are not just the flatly existing human being that secular modernism would tell us that we are, despite all that interiority and maybe even the interiority of an unconscious and all that and repressed things within us. There is a sense of being, perhaps, if you like, manifesting many faces, having within us many imaginal figures, if you like, being many imaginal figures. So there's a dimensionality that opens up through the imaginal practice and through the erotics of the imaginal. The dimensionality opens up not just of other but also of self.

So, for example, one might have an image that one's practicing with, and perhaps this image has to do with being in a certain relationship with a certain divine figure, this imaginal figure. Maybe it's a tantric deity. Maybe it's some other kind of god or goddess or whatever. And perhaps in the image one is being held by them, or resting in their lap, or somehow receiving, as a human being, their divine love, or being held by that particular divinity. So right there, what you have in the image is a constellation of human/divine. The self feels human, and as human, receives succor or encouragement

or nourishment or love or whatever, infused somehow in the imaginal through that divine other, the imaginal figure of divine. And that actually is a very important stage, that human/divine polarity there. The self as human, imaginal other as divine. But I would say that if you hang out in the image long enough, you start to recognize – if you open up the awareness, you start to recognize, oh, the self is also image here in this image. There is imaginal self. And because dimensionality is always a part of an image, in the way that we're using it, the dimensionality of the self in this image that we have of being in the lap of the god or the goddess, the dimensionality of the self starts to open up, starts to expand. And dimensionality moves towards divinity, so that eventually what happens is you have two divinities sitting there or being together, the self and the divine.

And, if you like, that's another stage. Or rather than saying it's better or worse, it's just a different stage. It's a kind of, I would say, inevitable movement if we allow the soulmaking dynamic to move in every direction – in other words, towards the self in the image as well as towards the other, the object which we're usually focusing on, oftentimes. It's a matter not of making anything happen, but rather of noticing and just being with and allowing something that is a natural, organic movement of the soul, of this eros-psyche-logos dynamic.

There's all kinds of examples here. In the example I gave in the last talk of the raft and the infusion of black blood from the goddess there, and then me going outside and feeling the power and the energy in my body from this black blood that she had given me, and then becoming myself a divinity, sensing myself imaginally as a divinity, as this dancing, stomping, powerful, thickset, muscular god, also in connection very much with nature, receiving that infusion of the blood, the kind of strange, divine nectar from nature. So there's this spreading of the soulmaking, spreading of the imaginal, spreading of the erotic, and spreading also in this sense of the locus of divinity, if you like, and the faces of divinity.

The same is true in regard to all this when we're dealing with an actual person who has become for us a theophany, whatever our actual relationship is with them, whether they're a teacher or a guru or a lover or whatever it is. When actually we have an imaginal perception of a person, we are also imagining our self in relationship to them. And even if this person isn't yet a divinity for us in that sense, there's not that theophany there, we want to see what the image of self is and what it can be. So we include the self image, the image of self, in the constellation, in the imaginal erotic constellation. We include that and we let it fill out. Eventually, ourselves, our self, becomes a theophany, or plural, theophanies. We are perhaps many theophanies. And we get the sense, slowly, as I said, of the self as well as the other, as well as the beloved other, as well as the object – could be an inanimate object – being infinite, that we are infinite.

And I don't mean here, in this kind of practice, I don't only mean we are infinite in the sense that our essence is infinite awareness or infinite love or some of those openings to a universal essence of oneness, et cetera, so that, you know, you can perceive infinite awareness or infinite love being the fabric of the universe, and we are the same thing in essence, so that therefore I am infinite. I don't just mean that. I mean also infinite in the possibilities of the possible faces, if you like, who can come through us – what I used to call the vertical spectrum of the imaginal, but I might drop that word, vertical, because it has too many loaded connotations. There's this spectrum of imaginal faces that can manifest, if you like, through another, I can perceive, and through the self. So through myself and through another. And we can get this sense of all that being there as a sort of spectrum of dimensionality that they are, that we are. There's infinite possibilities there in the perceptions of, in this case, one's own soul in its particularities. It's not in its universality of just being awareness or love or something like that, but in its particularities, in my personhood, in my particular manifestations.

So this also – we said self, other, world, and eros, they get co-constellated together, so all this applies, this movement of the soulmaking dynamic to involve and include the sense of the world and the sense of eros itself, *if*, *if* the eros-psyche-logos dynamic is allowed, if it's not hindered, if it's not blocked or refused or dismissed, where it wants to go, et cetera. If the soulmaking dynamic is allowed

to spread, naturally, organically, it will start giving dimensionality, giving beauty, depth, all the imaginal richness, and eventually even divinity, self, other, world, and eros itself. So when a few talks ago I used that term, autoeroticism, and then I said actually we'll come back to that as a facet of eros, as something to recognize as an aspect of eros, that there was an autoeroticism that was, if you like, part of eros, what I really meant there was that. What distinguishes, say, an experience of eros from just an experience of, let's say, *metta* or *metta* with imagination, you know, when we imagine the person that we're giving *metta* to being happy or whatever, what distinguishes eros from that – and this is something we'll come back to in regards to the distinctions between eros and *metta*, et cetera – is that, one of the things is that eros has this autoeroticism as an aspect to it, meaning that the self is also regarded erotically, is given dimensionality, is attractive in that erotic way that we've been talking about. And not just the self, but also the self's eros.

So whatever image of erotic connection is involved in the imaginal perception of the constellation of self and other, whatever eros the self is seen imaginally to be participating in, that connection – whether it's penetration or opening or being penetrated or whatever it is – that eros is also kind of regarded erotically, if you like. In other words, that, too, has dimensions, has beauty. The eros itself becomes an erotic object. Our own eros becomes an erotic object for us. So not just the other – also the self and the images of the self, that comes alive. There's eros towards the self because the self is given dimensionality, given imaginal dimensionality. And also the eros that the self feels, et cetera, also becomes an erotic object, is given imaginal dimensionality. There's this attraction, almost like wanting to taste it, to connect with it, to open to the very eros more. It has beauty, it has dimensionality, it has divinity. So autoeroticism. This soulmaking dynamic is spreading in these different directions, in a way to touch everything.

So in regard to this and the self and the sense of the self or the image of the self that's operating at any time, we can say that a desire is not eros when it arises from and when it is serving the kind of narrow, habitual and solidified self that's perhaps seeking pleasant sensations or seeking a sense of solidity, to solidify itself, or seeking to aggrandize itself. That kind of desire is more what we call clinging and craving or greed, et cetera. That sense of self, when it's narrow, habitual, solidified self, seeking pleasure, seeking solidity, seeking aggrandizement, self-aggrandizement, that self is sensed as unitary: this is the self. It's the real self. There's one of them. And it's also kind of one-dimensional. It's just – it lacks this imaginal dimensionality, this multiplicity of beings, this sense of shading into divinity, of emanating from divinity and all that.

It's unitary, one-dimensional. It's also reified. There's a sense of "I believe in this self." It's not even an intellectual concept: I believe in the reality of this self, this one-dimensional self and unitary self. And all of that, in opposition to an imaginal sense of self, it's not unitary, it has this spectrum of the imaginal, it's not one-dimensional because of that very spectrum, and it shades into divinity or emanates from divinity or expresses or is a theophany, and it's seen it's an image, seeing image as image, so it's not reified. Desire that comes out of this narrow, habitual, solidified self is *not* eros. Imaginal desire can be eros, is eros. The same with the sense of the other. When that other, the erotic object, is not seen as image, is not recognized to be imaginal, to be seeing image as image, we're not seeing image, when the object is reified, we really believe in this real thing, that, too, gives rise to a desire that is greed or craving.

Already just as an aside to note: you can hear me going back and forth between the sort of small definition of eros as just this wanting of connection and the larger definition which implies the imaginal, implies seeing an image as image, et cetera. So just keep your ears out for that. Now, oftentimes of course, just because of what we've been taught and heard so much, we view desire that arises this way – so there's desire, and maybe it's sexual desire, maybe it's erotic desire, and yet we view it as if it's – automatically we assume it's a defilement or something bad and that it's something that the self is doing. Especially if you've heard enough sort of standard Dharma teachings without enough differentiation in them or interpreted them without enough differentiation, then desire is a

movement of the self, it comes from the self, it's the self that desires. If I somehow had no self, I wouldn't desire, et cetera. Desire comes from the self and desire reinforces the self. So very often we automatically assume that. No, no, no. Maybe we can slow down a little bit and have a look, and sense into this desire, and let it amplify, let it fill out imaginally, with the mindfulness, with the sensitivity to the resonances, with the energy body and all that.

Because sometimes what happens, if we have this larger perspective on what a human being is, is the desire arises *from* the imaginal figure, from, if you like, the divinity, from the deity. Whose is this desire? Is it just this narrow, flat, unitary self desiring? Or is it actually, as William Blake said, a divine influx? Where's it coming from? Whose is it? Maybe this desire is from Dionysus or whatever, or some other imaginal figure that's more personal, less kind of archetypal. But then what happens – this desire arises, I automatically assume something about it, "It's from the self. It's a defilement," et cetera, and maybe that assumption locks into place a certain view, which, as always, the view, the way of looking, shapes the perception, shapes what unfolds, and maybe that desire actually becomes craving or greed or clinging or whatever we want to call it in a narrow sense through the very view. You understand?

Something to explore. Can only explore this by experimenting. Only explore this by experimenting. What happens if I grant something another possibility, if I enter into another way of looking? What happens? I'm not saying it's easy and it does, maybe not for everyone, but probably for a lot of people take a bit of practice, really. It requires certain meditative skills and capacities and arts to be developed. If I experiment, what do I see? What do I uncover? What gets opened up?

Okay. So this, as I was saying, eros-psyche-logos dynamic, this weave of soulmaking, the way the tree of soul grows in different directions organically, the way the fire leaps and catches as the fire spreads, the way it does that and ignites and sparks other things that it catches hold of. And one is – we've said it already – the world. So self, other, world. And we've been calling this cosmopoiesis. I've talked a bit about it in other talks and other retreats. But can give many, many examples, countless examples here. The possibilities again are infinite, infinite. So again, might give some examples that come specifically out of a kind of sexual eros that's working in the imaginal. Again, just to open up that possibility where we can sometimes be a little shy, a little doubtful. And of course, you know, I'm aware how, as I said earlier, if someone were to just pick up a talk at a certain point and listen, "How on Earth did we get here?", but I really hope you can see how it fits very organically. We're gradually opening certain doors and underpinning them with understandings and meditative skills that make them really fruitful and beautiful and important, I think.

So let's go through a few examples. Sometimes, you know, either in an imaginal constellation, like what I referred to before, we perceive a kind of imbalance – we feel very human, and the other, the imaginal other, is not human but divine. And there's a kind of imbalance there, so in a way we might feel somehow less than. This pulls on all kinds of psychological structures and stuff, and we'll touch on this. But in a way, sometimes it's just – one way of looking at it, it's just the eros-psyche-logos dynamic has just not opened up enough yet; it *wants* to move in every direction, towards the self as well as towards the other, but it just has flowed more in one direction before it's flowed in the other direction equally or as fully, or it's not being allowed there. We'll come back to this.

Sometimes we actually perceive that imbalance in an actual relationship in our life, human to human, where again there's some kind of perceiving of the other, with all their imaginal depth and beauty and perhaps even divinity, et cetera, and we somehow feel, or at a certain stage we can somehow feel less than or wanting in some way. So it's relatively common. Perhaps we feel we are in love with this person or with this imaginal figure or with this person imaginally imbued, if you like. And we can feel that they love us but they're not *in* love with us. So there's a kind of dimension missing; the dimensions are not equal. Or sometimes we want, you know, very normal human desire to want to see and hear from the other that we are desired deeply (and also sexually, including that, that we are desired sexually).

So giving examples, this is a very common dynamic. Something like this was going on with – I was working in practice with that. And it's like, okay, so there's this imbalance right now. And just giving myself, actually helped by the imaginal figure, the okayness, the permission to feel and allow this wanting. I want her – in this case, there was the male/female in the image, along sort of biological gender lines. And I want her to want me, I want to see and hear that she wants me, that she wants to let me in, and that means let me in heart and soul and physically as well, that she wants to open her body to me erotically, sexually. And the first thing was just kind of being encouraged by the imaginal figure that it's really okay to feel that and to allow that feeling. And that encouragement, and allowing myself to do that, actually liberated a lot of images there, so the whole thing became very fecund as sort of imaginal territory. A lot of images quite quickly.

It was actually, interestingly, I was on my way teaching somewhere as all this – I was sitting on the train, it was quite a long train journey, and working with these images on the train and going to the station and different... So on and off in that way. And there was a liberation of all these images from the allowing, from the feeling in to that feeling, slightly uncomfortable feeling, but actually allowing it. Liberation of images. And then at some point, tremendous energy infused my whole body, the energy body with this, and the image was of roaring, like I was roaring like a lion roars, and bellowing fire the way a dragon bellows fire. So a lot of energy and power in this. Bellowing fire. And in fact, I became flame. I became a being of flames. A lot of, as I said, energy and power felt, but still in regard to the original imaginal sense of the situation, I still – despite all the energy and power, I realized I still need to be granted admission, if you like. She still needs to let me in. She still needs to say to me, or I felt, “I want you inside me. I want to let you in,” et cetera.

This power was not the kind that would force that. So it was tremendous power, yet it didn't use it, and in fact you can't force. I mean, in any situation, you can't force someone to want you that way, to want to let you in heart and soul and body. So there was this interesting mixture. At the same time there was this tremendous power that I felt, and roaring and bellowing fire, a lot of energy in the body, at the same time as recognizing no matter how powerful that felt there was also this dependency. I am still, in the image there, I am still dependent on her, on this imaginal figure, communicating to me, granting me admission. So there was that double sort of constellation existing, the power, tremendous power and dependency at the same time, like in almost opposites coalescing there or rather mixing, co-constellating.

And also the sense, as I tuned in to the imaginal figure, there was the sense, the recognition, that she *did* grant me admission, she did want me that way, in those ways. So all this was happening: the power, the recognition of dependency, and, as I tuned in to her image more, the recognition that she did grant me that and she did want me. And what happened then was that there was a cosmopoiesis in the sense that the flame that I was, I found myself in a world of flames. So this is a very powerful perception; it's extremely subtle. It was happening on the train. So I'm still aware of who's sitting next to me and opposite me and all that and what's out the window, but at the same time there's like a level of perception, subtle but very powerful, of a world of flames. This is not a hell realm at all, hell realms of burning and all that; not at all. It felt very wondrous, very beautiful. Each thing, in a way, was a flame, a kind of essence of each thing was a flame, and fire, flame is eros. So each thing was felt to be kind of expressing its own eros as flame, as fire.

And sensing in to that, each thing, each being, and the world as a whole, its eros, its desire was that it wanted me to love it. The eros that I was sensing in to there was each thing, each being and the world as a whole desired, it wanted me to love it. The world, this world of flames, or the world that I now saw – it was the same world – was erotic in essence. Including the sexual, but not necessarily just the sexual at all. It wanted – each thing, each being, and the world as a whole wanted, wanted me to love it. And in a way, recognizing that as human beings – this is a kind of altered mystical perception – we can feel that call, not just from the beings, the animate beings of the world, but from the so-called inanimate nature and the things of the world. So in myself, I felt the eros, I felt the desire to respond to

this wanting in things, this wanting that things were expressing, and I felt that very physically. I felt it in my tongue, actually, predominantly in my tongue, in my mouth, in my genitals, in my hands. My whole body was involved in this sense.

Sort of just feeling that and taking this – you know, this was happening over some time, and really giving a lot of very sensitive, delicate attention to it, and opening and working with it. I also felt that the eros that I was feeling was the eros of the divine. In other words, this was the gods', if you like, or Buddha-nature's desire to penetrate. Because I felt it as a kind of wanting to penetrate, if you like, all things. This is very, again, sexual there. So the movement there was more, quote, "masculine" as opposed to the movement of opening and receiving, which could have been both or either. So this is different. The divine's desire to penetrate all things, to sexually penetrate all things. What does this mean? It's an imaginal perception. It's not the same as the divine pervading all things with its essence, its oneness of beingness or love or awareness. Something much more particular there.

All the wanting here, the wanting that belonged to things, their wanting to be loved and the wanting that was coming through me to respond to that and to penetrate, all was seen, or evolved through the imaginal work, seen to have divine dimensions. I'm reminded of somewhere Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote, "All beauty yearns to be seen. All beauty yearns to be seen." And I don't know enough about him or what he meant by that, but here's a sense of opening to a mystical or imaginal perception, very particular, where each thing, each being and the world wants its beauty to be seen, to be celebrated, to be loved, to have that erotic connection, and in a way, for that to penetrate it, et cetera. So very particular kinds of cosmopoesis opening there.

And another example. Sometimes we might be – again, might be purely so-called intrapsychic image or actually someone we are in a certain relationship to. And, as I said before, eros gives rise to, actually supports and nourishes an increase in the way we love, in the ways that we love the beloved other. Also it supports an increase of the ways and the depths and the breadths in which we appreciate, in which we sense and see and feel their beauties, plural, and their divinity. So eros opens all this, because of all of what we've been talking about, eros-psyche-logos dynamic. So that in relation to this, let's say, person in one's life, where we have this kind of relationship, the eros there, if it's allowed, can actually start to, "I love your body," but that also begins to have a fullness. "I love your bones. I love your blood. I love your veins. I love your kidneys." It's got this whole other visceral dimension. And eventually, "I love all your matter. I love all the matter that is you, so to speak." And so the eros is, if you like, moving there to the realm of matter. And it can do this in all kinds of ways.

So what can happen there, the way the soulmaking infuses and spills over into the perception of matter, there's so many possibilities. But in this case, could then be that one feels that eros open up that relationship with the matter of the beloved other and then that spreads into the world – again, talking about cosmopoesis here – spreads to a love for all matter. But the perception of that matter is not matter as a quantum physicist would conceive it in that kind of way. It's not even divine as a sort of emanation of light. It's matter just as commonly experienced, as we tend to think of this sort of stuff that we don't really think much about, ponder what it is; we just kind of bump into it and assume what every other modernist assumes, that's our experience of it. So a love for all matter that way. And again, this kind of thing, if it opens up, you might check – it's often easier for this cosmopoesis, this love of matter, to spread to other *living* matter, things in nature and animals and trees and grass and whatever.

But I remember experiencing this and actually having some bones in front of where I was meditating. You could see how it spread not quite so easily as it did to living matter, but it spread almost as easily to the bones, because they were once living, they were organic. And then a little more difficult to spread but still possible to plastic things that were around. So it spreads to all matter. But not in a way that's linked with or dependent on them providing me with pleasant *vedana*. It didn't seem – it might be easier with that at first, but it doesn't have to be actually linked with that at all, or even being conventionally beautiful. Because the whole thing started – we don't usually think of veins and

livers as beautiful in that sense. But there was this love for all matter, independent of whether it was conventionally, quote, “beautiful,” or whether it was providing me with pleasant *vedana*.

At other times, this love and appreciation for the body of another, the sense of the imaginal other, might spread to a cosmopoesis that’s much more kind of ethereal in its dimensions. So many possibilities here, but for example, one might perceive the world around one, the trees, the grass, whatever it is, the buildings, and have the perception that it’s as if light or lights are shining through and into this world of matter, or that this matter and this world is somehow a reflection or a refraction of the light of higher levels, if you like, of other worlds, if you like. But in a way that doesn’t really at all need, and often it won’t, diminish this world as somehow less than or inferior or not valuable, this world and these appearances of every day, but rather giving them beauty, giving them other dimensions of sacredness through the light that comes through them, comes through to them.

So all kinds of possibilities. And again, one might be working with an erotic image of a beloved other and one might have this sort of wider sense of sexual erotics pervading the image, constellating the image. And maybe we have, like we’ve alluded to already, the whole body is penetrated, and independent of whether you’re biologically male or female or whatever. The whole body can be penetrated by the imaginal other or penetrate the imaginal other. The whole body, the whole being is somehow entered. Or, and/or, one can be devoured by the deity or by the god, so all one’s flesh and bones, imaginal flesh and bones, is devoured, or one devours this imaginal figure. All these possibilities and permutations. And again, they can give rise, if we dwell in the meditation with these kind of things and work with them as I said, sensitively and with the mindfulness there, then they can spread sometimes into a cosmopoesis. And it might be, for instance, the cosmos is mystically devouring me, it’s eating me. And this might sound to someone like, “Oh, that’s terrible,” but actually can feel really wonderful, this sense of participating in some kind of mystical dimension of the kind of being or process of the cosmos. We can say this physical body will dissolve, et cetera, and eventually I have to, in Buddhist language, give my aggregates back to the universe; this is something different. There’s a kind of imaginal, mystical perception that the cosmos is eternally eating me, mystically eating me, and I’m participating in something there at some level, mystical level of being.

Or, as I said, the cosmopoesis might be that I somehow am devouring the cosmos. What does this mean? Again, in some ways, I do devour at least part of the cosmos, organically and in ideas. So that’s all true. It’s giving this other dimension – it’s expanding those kinds of ideas into other, more mystical, more hard-to-articulate dimensions. And it might be that it moves back and forth between being devoured and devouring the cosmos, being devoured by the cosmos and devouring the cosmos. Maybe even back and forth very quickly. Maybe even, in some completely illogical way, simultaneously the two are happening – the cosmos is devouring me, and I am devouring the cosmos. Of course, again, at a material level, we can see there’s a certain truth in that. There’s so many possibilities here. So I just want to – really partly what I’m wanting to do is just open up the sense of just how much is possible.

One more. I was in meditation and an imaginal figure, beautiful, she came and kissed my heart and my torso gently, just feeling the resonances of that. In this case actually it did progress to more sexual imagery. But again, there it stayed at a very specific sexual image and really receiving from her, in the image, dwelling with that and feeling it and receiving through that sexual interaction and the sexual love there, receiving from her so much tenderness. This imaginal figure was imbuing her sexual love with so much tenderness, and she wanted, it seemed to me as I felt into it, she wanted out of love, out of pure love, to give me pleasure. So working with that in the meditation, this is what is tuned in to, her love and this wanting to give me pleasure. This becomes a kind of wavelength or dimension of the image, very specific and subtle, the tuning there. And needed again to feel the whole energy body and open to the pleasure there. So this is – well, actually it’s not *that* hard to do, but it takes the kind of skills that we’ve been talking about developing. Very specific, very subtle tuning, whole energy body involved, and the ability to open to that.

And out of that – and you probably are not surprised at this point – *samadhi* came. So I could have this possibility, kind of fork in the road there – you can go just into some kind of *jhana* there of the *samadhi* and leave the image behind, or stay with the image and enjoy the pleasure of the *samadhi*, mixed, or let it spread a little bit. And it was the third one that I chose. Because what happened was there was a sense, just dipping into the *samadhi* a bit, and then the sense of a heavenly realm opening up. Actually, rather it was *this* world that I was in, the room that I was in, became a heavenly realm infused with divine eros. That was the sense, that the world was transubstantiated, transformed – transubstantiated is a better word – into a heavenly realm infused with divine eros. So I had this sense, and even as I say it now, it's like, "What does that mean?" So even then, part of the mind was like, "What does it mean when I have that sense?" In some ways, it was a vague sense. In other ways it was extremely precise and very, very subtle, but it was a sense. It was palpable, a perception, an imaginal perception of this world, this room and the surroundings that I was in outside, et cetera.

In this imaginal perception, in this cosmopoesis, eros was woven in to the cosmos. The cosmos was felt, seen to be, a garden of eros, a garden of delight. And with all that, of course, eros was right. There was something fundamentally, profoundly right about eros. It has its basic, beautiful, divine place in the scheme of things, in the cosmos, actually permeating the cosmos, and eros is divine. In that imaginal perception that opened up, eros is divine. And all this, there was a tremendous amount of delight and sense of beauty, inner and outer, and a lot of joy, and the sense was really of profound gift, that all of this was gift, that eros was gift and the cosmos was gift. So the whole cosmos was experienced in such a beautiful way as gift, as erotic gift.

So you can see how that cosmopoesis mirrors or rather has its seeds in the initial image. And again, I was sort of – because I'd been used to some of this before, was playing with it – was playing then as I opened my eyes and moved around with the equality of perception, if it applied just as easily to, say, plastic or the sound of a plane overhead, just as easily to those kind of things, unpleasant *vedana* or man-made, not necessarily aesthetically pleasing artifacts, functional things, if it applied as equally to those as it did to the beautiful trees and the sky and all that.

There's quite a bit more to this. This is interesting. So I was playing with that equality thing just to get a sense, and then dipping in and out. And what I noticed was at a stage of this perception opening, this cosmopoetic perception opening, there was a stage where I felt that it was the divine purpose of the cosmos to express eros to me, to love me and give me delight. So I was, if you like, a graced recipient of divine eros. Now, at the very same time, I knew it wasn't just me – it applied to everyone else. It was just a matter of people opening to that perception. So I was not in any way singled out there or had any sense of being special, different than other people.

But there was a sense of like – and again, it doesn't make sense rationally, and it's image as image, seeing image as image, holding these perceptions so that we know image is image. We're not reifying them, we're not clunking down on them as a sort of truth, but yet holding them so that they can have tremendous power. So it's neither dismissing nor grabbing at and reifying, okay, and claiming a truth there. But that was just a stage, because – you know, another part of my mind was like, "Don't be ridiculous," you know? But somehow holding this in a kind of middle way that they can have tremendous power and efficacy in all kinds of directions, for the being, for the insight, for the understanding, for the perception. But that was just a stage, and eventually it just moved to a sort of more general sense of the cosmos being infused with and expressing eros, so the cosmos is erotic. And again, with all this, there was a sense of dimensionality to the cosmos, as if the cosmos has, if you like, different dimensions.

So later, I think it was the same day, and I was on retreat at the time, I sat down to meditate and there was, again, tremendous power and expansion. The energy body really expanding and feeling very imbued with energy and power. And following that, letting it constellate an image of the self, of the energy body, it felt like I had become imaginally a wrathful deity, if you know those Tibetan images of Yamantaka and – there's lots of them, but. A wrathful deity or a divine beast, a bestial deity. So again,

for me there was roaring and waves of energy passing through the imaginal body. So I wasn't actually roaring; no one would have heard anything. This is the imaginal sense. And it really felt very palpable and strong in the physical body and felt very, very good, what was going on there with the energy body and the imaginal body.

And then, coming back to the imaginal figure that I was working with earlier that I described, this divine beast, wrathful deity, with a subtle gesture in the image claimed her. It made clear through a certain gesture of the body its erotic claim on her: "You are mine." So there's a desire there. There was my desire there, my sexual and erotic desire. But it also seemed – again, it's like tuning in, noticing what's happening with the image, what else is in the image. There was desire, yes, but also the sense that this claiming, my claiming of her, of this imaginal figure, was, so to speak, already happening. So it's a desire and an act to do something and it expresses desire, but this claiming and this desire was already happening. It's not so much what I or this divine beast wants, but more that it's already flowing from me, from this imaginal self, the divine beast. It's flowing to her eternally, or rather timelessly, or as I think Henry Corbin used to say, in hierophanic time, in sacred time, a time that doesn't progress – it's almost like discrete, timeless moments or images.

So it's already flowing, this movement of claiming, the sense was as I felt in, getting the sense of what's actually pregnant in this image, then a dimension of the image reveals itself, which is this hierophanic dimension. We've touched on this before. The desire there was to give her pleasure. So again, the desire there mirrors her wanting to give me pleasure before, and now it's me desiring to give her pleasure. I could see that the imaginal figure, she enjoys being claimed. She enjoys me gesturing in a way or communicating, "You're mine." So again, all this could sound like it's ego or this or that. Far from it. There's something so light and so beautiful and sacred flowing through it. So it feels very good in the body, and again, the body sort of become flames on and off; that moved back and forth.

And again, I went outside, and again, the cosmos experienced as erotic. I'm in a heavenly realm where the cosmos is, by nature, in its essence at one dimension, erotic. It's an erotic cosmos. But in this case, I was not so much the recipient. So in the cosmopoetic perception of self and the world or the cosmos, I was not so much the recipient. Rather, it was my role, the role of this imaginal self or the imaginal role of self, my role and my ability to let eros flow through me, to flow from me to others, to create beauty in that way and to give delight and to give pleasure through that. And again, not that that was unique to me; it was clear to me that's everyone's role and ability. But what's unique is the ways in which each of us do that.

So again, you can see how the imaginal self interfaces or spills over, shades over, into the lived, actually physically manifested self. Because I could say that about my life. I'm sure everyone could say that about their life. But the perception of that gets a whole other dimensionality and beauty to it through the imaginal dimension of that opening up, gets this profundity, breadth, richness, complication, sacredness to it. I think later still the same day, or the next day, I can't remember, but the same couple in the imaginal meditation, and really focusing then on *our* love, not so much her giving me pleasure out of love or me desiring to give her pleasure or claim her out of love, but our love, the two of us in sort of mutual, a dance of love, of eros, of delight, if you like.

And when I look around me then the cosmos after that is again infused with eros, and our dance, our loving, is, if you like, mirroring or echoing or infused with the divine cosmic eros. This is something that can happen between two people, two actual people in their relationship, if they allow the soulmaking dynamic to expand the sense of what's happening in actual relationship. But you can see in this little three-part imaginal practice that I've just described, when the focus was more on her, on the imaginal figure's actions and qualities, then I felt the self to be the recipient of that in the cosmopoesis, reflecting the actual imaginal perception in the narrower image. And when I lost the cosmopoetic perception, I could regain it by focusing on that aspect of the original image, of her wanting to communicate love to me through the sexual, through the erotic. Focusing on that in the image brought back that particular cosmopoesis of receiving cosmic love, divine love.

In the second little part there, the focus was on myself and the power and the energy and the divine beast there giving her pleasure, again, with the eros and the love, and then the cosmopoesis led to a sense of that in its cosmic place, of my self as a channel, if you like, for the divine's giving or outpouring through me, was what characterized the cosmopoesis. Again, if you lose it, if I lost it, I could focus back on that initial image and the cosmopoesis comes back, just a little bit and the cosmopoesis comes back. And in the last part when it's more mutual, it's like the us, our back and forth and flow of love together, then again the cosmopoesis there was reflecting that kind of balance, that kind of equality, if you like.

So we can see, begin to see the potential here of what it can open up in the perception if we allow eros to have and inseminate fully the whole dynamic structure of the eros-psyche-logos and that whole movement, the whole soulmaking movement. And partly, again, I'm using these particular examples, sexual examples, just...some of them I'm aware, devouring and all this, it sounds quite dark, and claiming, and some people would be cautious for different reasons around that. But I really want to say, first of all, as I said in the other talk, there's a whole range here, and a lot of the even sexual erotic is not dark at all, is very, very light and gentle or whatever. So there's a whole range, but yes, to very – not just of so-called darkness but also just of what is sort of more straightforward or normal or anatomically plausible and all that, to really quite far-out imagery and stuff. So really that whole range is open.

But within that, to trust if something seems darker or stranger. What's happening here is not disrespectful to the imaginal figure, even if the imaginal figure is actually an other person – it's not disrespectful – whom you have that kind of relationship with. It's not lacking in love. You can notice this. You can feel it. Is it really disrespectful? Don't buy just the first thing that the mind tells you. Is it really lacking in love? Is it really an objectification of that other person? To me, objectification means I've somehow shrunk this person down to not see the totality of the other's being. But have a look if this comes up. Dare to have a look. Is it that? Is it lacking in respect and love? Is it an objectification? No. You'll see actually that most often that involves a totality and respect and love is there. Neither is it out of control, and neither does it increase defilement. You can feel in all this, even in the very dark, there are kinds of sacredness and holiness that are palpable there. Again, as I said, the whole movement here with eros is that it opens up the range of sacrednesses that we can feel and know and experience for ourselves, firsthand, woven into the cosmos, woven into our being and others, and in ways that make a difference to our life, make a profound difference.

So we said, just to recap a little bit, the soulmaking dynamic, the expansion, fertilization, insemination, deepening, enriching, widening of eros, psyche, and logos, the mutual movement there, mutual expansion, needs to flow or will flow, if it's unimpeded, in all these different directions. So it will flow not just towards the beloved other, the object, the imaginal erotic object, but also back towards the self, so to speak, and the imaginal self, amplifying that. And also towards the sense of eros itself. Now, we have this phrase, "falling in love." What does it mean, or I wonder where that expression came from, to fall in love. There's something uncontrollable about falling.

It may be – I don't know, but one way of looking at it is – that what's happening here in the expansion of the sense of the other, and the expansion of the sense of the self, and of the eros itself, and even of the world, as we said, the soulmaking dynamic will move in all these directions and expand them all, but it doesn't have a limit. Infinite – the pothos will just keep expanding this potentially. And maybe falling in love, that's what we're feeling. We're feeling like there's a kind of open-ended movement and we're not even sure who we are anymore because it's just being opened into a kind of space in which it keeps opening, and the other, too, and perhaps the sense of love itself, of our sense of love, of eros, is also opened. And it doesn't seem to be landing anywhere, and it's not stopping anywhere, because the soulmaking dynamic, the erotic dynamic, just keeps opening. And that feeling has this kind of bottomless feeling or limitless feeling to it. So maybe, I don't know, maybe that's part of what happens when we say "I'm falling in love. I'm falling in love with you."

But there's another dimension here which may or may not happen, and actually all of this may or may not happen in actual life. We'll come back to what blocks this kind of infinite and comprehensive, potentially infinite, potentially comprehensive movement of the soulmaking dynamic. Because here, as I said several times now, it's possible also the sense of eros is seen and felt erotically and given imaginal dimensions so that, for example, eventually we feel something like a divinity of eros, or it's divine eros that infuses the cosmos. My eros, this eros that I feel in me and coming from me is divine, or it mirrors the divine eros, or it comes from the divinity, the Buddha-nature, God, whatever you want to call it, the archetypes.

So all this can be there. And as I said, again recapping, there's an infinity of possibilities. If the soulmaking dynamic is not hindered, blocked, in any of its potential directions and movements and unfoldings, then there are infinite possibilities with respect to the self, the sense of the self, the image of the self, the conception of the self; with respect to the other, the beloved other, of course; with respect to the world; and with respect to eros itself. That fourfold co-constellated aspect – self-other-world-eros – each of them has infinite possibilities if the soulmaking dynamic is allowed its natural expansion, deepening, movement, fertilization.

So the image and the idea of each of these – self, other, world, and eros – the image and idea, the psyche and the logos, of each of these and all of these is expanded. So my eros is mirroring the divine eros. That's both an image, it's an imaginal sense, and it's an idea, a logos. So you can see how, in regard to each of these, if eros gets going, if the erotic movement gets going, psyche and logos, they touch everything and everything involved in that constellation – self-other-world-eros – but also the notion of psyche itself, the notion of what the soul is and what an image is, gets also expanded, enriched, deepened, amplified. And even the image and the idea of ideas. In other words, the psyche and the logos of logos.

For example, we can feel or we can sense, as this whole soulmaking movement happens, that we are – our mind is, through image and through idea, through images and through ideas, is participating in the divine mind, the divine logos, if you like. So again, this is an image, but it's also an idea, isn't it? Or that what comes to us through image or through, again, through idea, through creative ideas, through concepts, is a manifestation of the world soul, of the, if you like, the soulmaking process of the cosmos. So these are both images and ideas. But they're not abstract ideas. Again, we're entertaining them, we're feeling them, we're plugging into them, if you like, in ways that really galvanize and catalyze and have a tremendous effect on the being, on the perception, on the ways of looking, on the energy body, on the soulfulness.

So when we talk about logos, we don't mean, as I said I think earlier, we don't mean something abstract. We mean an idea that finds its way into the way of looking, that is imbuing the way of looking, and because everything, the whole being is involved, the body, the soul, the perception, the intellect, et cetera, these ideas are not abstract. But the very idea of ideas, the very, if you like, psyche and logos of logos, the image and idea of image and idea and soul and mind, starts to also get amplified, enriched, deepened, given dimensionality, et cetera. So the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, the soulmaking dynamic, will also expand, complicate, deepen, widen the definitions we have of eros, of psyche or soul, and also of logos, of mind.

And in all this, in describing cosmopoiesis, we might start with eros in relation to an imaginal figure, but if we work with it, if we allow it, actually it brings an erotic relationship with nature, so that again the eros spreads. So the imaginal spreads to nature in the cosmopoiesis, but there's also, wrapped up in that, because all these things are interconnected – where there's eros there's image, where there's image there's eros. We start to feel, as that erotic relationship with nature starts to get supported and opened and nourished and ignited, then the eros and the love and reverence that are part of that, in relation to nature and the things of nature, animals and trees and all that, quite a lot begins to open up in terms of our perceptions of nature.

We tend to have, in our modernist cultures, “Only human beings have intelligence. Some animals have a very limited intelligence, but it stops at animals.” But maybe, through this erotic relationship with nature, we begin to perceive, in the cosmopoesis we begin to perceive other kinds of – let’s call it intelligence, other kinds of knowing. What is the intelligence of a tree? And I don’t just mean the biochemical intelligence of the way it works and photosynthesis and all that, how clever, or the intelligence of evolution. What’s the intelligence of a tree? What’s the communication of a tree or stones? Something happens in the erotic movement beginning to infuse our relationship with nature. Something happens. We perceive other kinds of intelligence. I’m not going to say much about that right now.

We also open up for us in that other ways of knowing, also in terms of the intelligence is opened up. So our whole being is involved in what intelligence means. My friend says, “My ovaries know. There’s an intelligence in my ovaries.” Or in the image, the tongue is connecting with maybe certain body parts of an image of another or something and there’s certain communication through the tongue, certain information, if you like, that’s being transmitted and received by the tongue. The whole body is involved in the imaginal process and in the erotic process more and more. We’ll come back to this. Sometimes we’ll say your three centers need to be involved – your belly, your heart, and your head. We’ll come back to that. So your belly means your body and certainly your sexual organs and that whole sexual dimension of your body and the energy, and your heart center meaning your emotionality and your affect and your love and whatever other emotions are going there, and also your head. We talked about logos and the importance of that. Sometimes shorthand saying “all your three centers need to be involved,” but actually it’s the whole being. Every dimension of our being, every dimension of the mind, every dimension of the soul, of the heart, and of the body opens up in ways that we might not expect, just because that’s what the soulmaking dynamic does, that’s what eros-psyche-logos dynamic does as it expands and fertilizes more and more.

In a nutshell, eros, as I said, supports, opens, ignites, spreads, deepens, widens our sense, senses plural, of sacredness. In all domains, in all kinds of areas, in all perceptions and in all kinds of particularities that we wouldn’t even have maybe noticed before. And the kinds of sacredness are, if you like, also co-constellated. So the kind of sense of divinity is co-constellated with that other four-part co-constellation – self, other, eros, world. We could add also the sense of divinity there. It’s also co-constellated with the sense of self, the other, of world, of eros. Or even the sense of no divinity. A flat universe is still a kind of constellation. When we have that kind of sense of – let’s call it no divinity, then there’s a certain kind of sense of self, because only a certain amount is allowed; a certain kind of perception and idea of the other; a certain kind of perception and idea of the world; and a certain kind of perception and idea of any eros or desire that might arise. So these five actually are co-constellated together.

Maybe I’ll just finish with something and I’ll come back to it later. I’ll just put it in now to seed something. I hope it’s not too much. Jung wrote in his memoirs, “We are in the deepest sense the victims and instruments of cosmogonic love.” In another place I think he said, “Eros is a cosmogonos.” That’s a fancy Greek word, cosmogonos means something that generates, *gonos*, *generate*, or *gonad*. It’s like something gives rise to the cosmos. So again, you get these myths saying eros or something like that gives rise to the cosmos, but we can see that in the phenomenology of our actual experience, that eros opens up, gives birth to the world, gives birth to the sense of the self, different senses of self, other, world, and eros, in cosmopoesis, and also of divinity. So the eros brings with it, or rather puts into motion, a cosmos-birthing process, actually birthing of many cosmoses, if you like, because there’s this infinity there.

And seeing our eros as divine, as I said, as gods, as divinities, as the Buddha-nature’s eros manifesting through us, is a certain view of divinity there, and of eros. And so all of that, you can see how it – the self and the world is constellated according to that. All this co-constellates each other in the soulmaking dynamic. What that means then is also that the kinds of divinity that we are able to

open to as perceptions, as actual experiences, are also infinite, because that five point co-constellation, self-other-world-eros-divinity is infinite in its potential, because the eros-psyche-logos dynamic is infinite in its potential. So the kinds of divinity are endless. The kinds of experiences of divinity, of perceptions, of senses of divinity are actually endless. We're going to come back to this, as I said; I'm just throwing it out now. They might be vague. But the perception and the conceptions of divinity are absolutely potentially infinite and varied. And that takes us out of the whole realm of dogma, either secular dogma or religious dogma.

The whole field, including the field of the exploration of what divinity might mean, becomes infinite in its potential. It's potentially infinite, is an infinitely, if you like, large and expanding playground for us, for the soul, for soulmaking. We'll come back to that.