

Logos in the Garden of Souls (Part 3)

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I remember many years ago one of my music teachers saying that I think it was General Eisenhower -- and I could have that wrong, but someone like that; and apologies to him and his memory if this is wrong; it actually doesn't matter who it was for the point of what I'm relating -- but General Eisenhower or someone said, proclaimed, "I only recognise two pieces of music: one is Yankee Doodle Dandy and the other isn't". And so, I don't quite know the context or even what he was getting at when he said that and whether it's relevant that the tune he did recognise was, you know, a patriotic nationalistic militaristic thing or not. But imagine someone or consider someone who has that kind of degree or extent of tone-deafness in relation to music. They are really quite unreceptive to music, and really quite unperceptive. So what they're perceiving or what they're getting from it is, you know, almost for some people would be staggeringly little.

Now if such a person were to insist that there is just one tune, Yankee Doodle Dandy, and the rest of it was just random noise, for instance, or the rest of it was all actually the same thing or something to that effect, what would you say to such a person if they absolutely insist that their perception there is reflective of reality? And probably in his case he is surrounded from childhood with people who seem to be getting something from music and school teachers etc. who hopefully kindly explain to him that, you know, he is missing something there etc. But what if only relatively few people, let's say, in the society *got* music, what would happen then? So there were only relatively few people who somehow music was very meaningful to them, full of all kinds of relationships that they could hear between sounds and themes and modulations of key or, you know, pitches and harmonies and rhythms and textures. And they perceived a great deal of nuance of structure and shading and evolution and all that, and it had a huge effect on them, on their heart, on their psyche, on the body, on the soul, the meaningfulness.

Imagine if there were just a few people like that in a society where everyone else was more like General Eisenhower. Might it not be then that they were considered somehow a bit perhaps even pathological, maybe crazy, maybe "oh they're just pretending, they're imagining something." And the claim of "that's not real, what they're perceiving there and what they feel there, seeing these relationships, these meanings etc., it's not real." For me this is quite an interesting reflection. It's like, is music and those relationships and the relationships between essentially just sounds, pitches, timbres, all that, are they real or not real? It's an interesting question. Is music -- and I don't just mean the fact that here's a pitch, a frequency of so many Hertz, and this rhythm is twice the rapidity of this rhythm, or something like that; I mean the whole gestalt of it including its sense of meaningfulness and beauty and soul and all that -- is that real or not real? Is that even the right question? Would we better ask, is it important?

Now for some people clearly it's not important and for others it's extremely important, music, those relationships, the meaningfulness there, the soulfulness, the heartfulness, the effects on the body, moving into dance, or just touching the psyche to the core, stimulating. That's not a question of reality or not reality. It's important. And another question, rather than is it real or not real, is is it soulmaking? Is it soulmaking? So these questions of what's important and what's soulmaking rather than what's real or not real, are more, if you like, important or relevant questions for certain areas of our experience -- actually of quite a lot in life.

And it's also interesting to note -- and I know this as someone who was a musician and studied music etc. -- that the sensitivity to music, the perceptivity, the receptivity, the understanding and the noticing

and the picking up of all kinds of nuances of relationships etc. between what is at one level just a sound, different kinds of sound, that is developable. So the perceptivity, the capacity of perception, the capacity of the subtleties, the nuance, the capacity of understanding concepts there and relationships, and even the degree of affect -- all this is developable, is trainable. What if we transfer that whole set of analogies there around music and receptivity, perceptivity, capacity of perception and conception in relation to music and soulfulness and importance, and transfer that to the perception of nature and the perception of others in our lives, or things, or the cosmos?

Again just as you can reduce music to just sort of the physics of sound -- this pitch, that frequency, this timber with this kind of wave on the oscilloscope or whatever, all that -- we are missing something that is more important to us, whose perception we can deepen and deepen and open and refine and enrich etc. Maybe the same with nature, maybe the same with the perception of others, the imaginal perception that we're talking about, when there's an erotic relationship with music, with art, with nature, with another, with others, with a thing, an object, with the cosmos. So the whole real/not real question is a little misguided there, and yet you can see just how much what is acceptable or the dominant view within a culture can tend to really whole sway and gain an authority just because it's what most people are able to perceive or it's not what most people are able to perceive.

Then again you get the converse as well in history, of the authority of those who claim to perceive something and the reality of what they perceive over those that don't. And oftentimes this is what you get. Apart from the political issues there you get a clash of realisms, a clash of essentially fundamentalisms: this is true, all reality is based on this, or this is real. Someone describes something, a mystical perception or a spiritual perception, imaginal perception: that's rubbish, it doesn't exist. And the other person says they do exist, these stones really are talking to me, this whatever it is. And both are kind of assuming -- even if they're not aware of it -- they're drawing on, basing on their arguments, if you like, an assumption of some kind of objective independently existing reality, and "it doesn't exist like that" or "it does exist like that." So that's all that reality kind of means. And people get very -- it's a charged issue. I mean, certainly in certain circles it's a charged issue. So some people who oppose a kind of any importance or place given to imaginal perception, mystical perception, spiritual perception etc., there's a kind of secular crusade that some people try and wage. And probably vice versa in history etc., or at present.

So someone might try and say something like "science shows that these things don't exist", but actually this person has not understood science and the whole scientific project. Does it show that these things do not exist? What is the range of science, what science even purports or is qualified or equipped to investigate? And what is the range of the scientific method? So the very structure of the scientific method is to leave out deliberately a whole slew of aspects of our being because that's not what we're doing; we're paring that away. Something similar goes on with mindfulness, as well. One is amputating, chopping off a whole range of other dimensions of our being, of our experience, of our ways of knowing etc. So a person who says something like that would do well, I think, to investigate a little bit of philosophy of science over the centuries and especially more recently, and to question even what science says about basic realities. For example, the electron, subatomic particle -- no one's ever seen an electron. The reality given to an electron is not the reality of a little tiny billiard ball that's a model of it. And even *that* model of it is not really the model of modern quantum mechanics and science. It has no *where*, no *when*, specifically, objectively, independently existing. The electron is no place, and it doesn't occur any time. It has no particular velocity or mass etc. It's not really even a thing, as Niels Bohr said. Does it even have existence? So don't assume that what you learned in high school and what you kind of surmised about science about what it proves or what it asserts is actually the reality of what someone at the frontiers of science -- let's say a particle physicist etc. -- who is really at the edge and actually doing creative research there, would actually hold.

And what, anyway, is the difference between the scientific method -- “I will deliberately put aside feelings, I will deliberately put aside imagination, I will deliberately put aside even ethical values, aesthetic values. That's the ideal of the scientific method. And it's a method. It's a methodology. It's not a fact about reality. So what started as a scientific methodology in the scientific revolution and with the western enlightenment actually became over several hundred years entrenched as an unquestioned fact about reality and existence. Strictly speaking, it's a methodology. It's one way of knowing. Someone a little bit more sophisticated, say who is keen to not give much place to imaginal perceptions, either intrapsychically or in and of the world, mystical states of consciousness etc., would say perhaps something like, would know that a notion of truth is no longer philosophically respectable, and if you go using words like truth etc., it tends to raise eyebrows in certain circles, of disapproval and questioning, supercilious questioning. Which is fine.

But then oftentimes they avoid that word, perhaps deliberately, and perhaps make a noise about avoiding that word, but underneath they're assuming some kind of basic existential reality or ‘facticity’ to borrow a fancy fashionable word from modern philosophy of our situation. “This is our situation. We live in a meaningless, material universe of which we are emergent. Our consciousness and our being and our complexity over the aeons of evolution is amazing, evolution out of matter and consciousness is an epiphenomenon. Essentially the world is material. There are no other dimensions *really*. And it's finite. We are finite. We are faced by our death and the extinction of all that,” and that “you're trying to pump up the imaginal or mystical perception of things that happen in meditation and all that, or ideas about ultimate transcendent -- something transcendent that we can open to beyond the senses etc., and all that beyond materiality, all that. This is just your attempt at a kind of consolation because you can't handle the fact, the truth of our existential situation. “Of course they don't use the word *truth*. They might use the word *facticity* or something. Or just the accusation of consolation-seeking already assumes that this is the truth: the existential fact is what you seek consolation with respect to.

So it might not use the language of *truth*. Might hide it. But it's functioning there. And there's the clash of realism so often in these kind of conversations. And a person who is drawn to investigating, and opening up, and exploring the imaginal and mystical states of consciousness and perception, and questioning the whole assumptions about reality etc. that are so pervasive in our modernist and materialist and physicalist culture, can very easily embark on that kind of investigation with all their enthusiasm and openness and very easily be shaken into doubt or, if you like, pressed in to doubt just because of the pervasiveness of the dominant view in our culture. Or they might hear a talk or read a book by someone who is presenting the case for erasing and eradicating mystical perceptions and mystical notions and any place for the imaginal -- in a talk, or in a book; could be in a secular context; could be in a secular Dharma context; could be here at Gaia House; could be wherever. And it's very easy now to be for a person to be buffeted this way and that by all the opinions flying around this way and that in the community, whether it's a smaller community or the larger community or the culture. So a person wanting to explore and having experiences and being really touched by certain experiences, imaginal openings and perceptions or meditative openings and experiences etc., all different kinds experiences which potentially can be really fertilising and fertile as seeds in the psyche, in the consciousness, in the life, can very easily, because of all these different opinions, because of what's dominant in the culture, and because of a lot of the aggression that often goes with that -- which itself is very interesting; why is there so much aggression bound up with this question?

But such a person, such a meditator, or a yogi, a person exploring this way, can then be as I said assailed by doubt, even paralysed. Had these experiences, been touched by them, feel drawn to them, want to open to them; something happens, I hear so and so give a talk, or I read a few pages of a book or whatever it is, and somehow it goes into a kind of freeze. Something gets paralysed. Or they just dismiss, or they are ashamed, or they keep it to themselves, and then it withers or something. And

especially when what they read or hear is quite aggressive. And the person who is being dismissive and perhaps being aggressive or polemical in their crusade against these kind of openings of perception, openings of ways of looking etc., doesn't need to even say anything particularly brilliant or radically incisive or particularly even new as an idea or an insight. Oftentimes all they need to do is just slowly and clearly, and take their time, just basically essentially repeat the dominant unquestioned view of the culture to which we have all been exposed over years in our culture; even if you grew up in a religious setting you're still exposed to what I call the dominant view of modernism, of physicalism etc., of meaninglessness and all that, of what the reality of our existential situation is.

So a person can grow up buffeted by different views -- oftentimes maybe that characterises our society -- but this physicalist -- what should we call it -- flat world view of secular modernism is something we've all been kind of subject to pervasively, and from all different sides, and loudly and implicitly. So a lot of these messages are really not even that obvious for years. So all the person has to do is just slowly and clearly repeat what you've already heard, what some part of you already understands and knows, without actually making explicit the assumptions underneath that and the historical context to that etc. In a way the power of that argument comes from the fact that it's a repetition, and it's a hearing of what one has already heard before and knows and been indoctrinated with, and "empowered from the solidarity", to borrow a phrase from Richard Rorty -- just the fact that so many people either buy into it completely or buy into it at least partially in this kind of cognitive dissonance between that and their more spiritual beliefs or whatever.

So because it's a repetition of what you've already been saturated in, and because everyone else seem to agree, it makes that position actually quite easy. I don't have to say anything or write anything particularly incisive or new or whatever. Or often what happens is a kind of straw man gets set up as an opposition who is an easy target -- someone like an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist or someone like that, or some of the corruption in the papacy, or someone who has clearly ridiculously holding on to something out of a desperate fear of their perceived existentialist situation and wanting consolation etc. It's a straw man. It's an easy target. Why am I saying all this? Jst to make the point again that, you know, a grasp of -- and I use that word carefully, *a grasp of* -- a rootedness in a carefully thought out, structured, supportive and generative conceptual framework, one that's to some degree reliable and robust and sophisticated and well-conceived enough; a grasp of that, a rootedness in that, a consideration of that and -- what's the word -- an internalisation even of that, an active use of that in navigation, in orientation, will provide stability in that kind of culture which is the culture we are in now, buffeted by different opinions, often quite aggressive etc., being exposed to certain points of view incredibly pervasive, literally inundated by that view so that we don't even consider it a dogma because it's so pervasive -- it's like a fish not recognising water, the water that it's swimming in.

But a grasp of, a rootedness in, a use of, an implementation of, an incorporation of a careful, supportive and generative conceptual framework brings, allows, a degree of stability, a degree of clarity, orientation. It gives a kind of foundation, as I think I said already, and actually will open up experiences further. So those experiences that are potentially fertilising as seeds can actually *be* that; they can actually fertilise the psyche, the mind, the heart, the being, the body, all of that, for the soul that wants soulfulness, that wants soulmaking. And admittedly -- and I'll come back to this -- we want that. Human beings seem to want that to different degrees.

So this is partly why a conceptual framework is really important, the entertaining of concepts and conceptual frameworks, deliberately, consciously, rigorously even. So we've said part of a conceptual framework that I would say is needed, a part of what must be included, is this whole unpacking, if you like, or explanation of the process of soulmaking. So based on, as I said, the phenomenologically noticing "oh yeah" and deliberately delineating different kinds of movement of desire, and so drawing

out this distinction of eros and what's involved with that and where it goes, just from observation of what is involved for us, for the psyche, for the *citta*, as human beings in our life, and then exploring and explaining the dynamics of that soulmaking process, eros psyche logos, in its expansion, because of the pothos that we've talked about. Some way or another, part of the conceptual framework needs to kind of draw that out and give it a kind of conceptual grounding and structuring that's fertile.

And another aspect of the conceptual framework needs to be this nonseparation of the *citta* -- which includes the soul, what we're calling soul -- non-separation of the mind-heart-soul-consciousness, *citta* let's call it, nonseparation of the *citta* and whatever we sense of reality or whatever reality is. There's a nonseparation of *citta* and reality. And implied in that, or included with that, is the emptiness of all things and the whole notion of ways of looking. So the way of looking is an aspect or a mode of being of the *citta*, if you like, at any time. All that -- this nonseparation of *citta* and (quote) "reality", and the emptiness of all things, and the notion of diversity of ways of looking that are available to us -- all that needs to be an aspect, an element woven in to the conceptual framework, which we said already. So that mindfulness is not and does not expose "reality" as it is, "things as they are". Does not expose "what is". Mindfulness does not bring us in to an encounter with something called life as someone put it "exorcised of the tumour of metaphysics". Uh-uh. Mindfulness is just one way of looking, wrapped up with a certain conceptual -- well, actually quite a lot of concepts wrapped up in mindfulness, in the experience even of bare attention. It's one way of knowing. Great, fantastic, wonderful. It's one way of knowing. Probably it's more than that; really implicit in what the Buddha meant by mindfulness is already a range of ways of knowing.

But what we want, what we need, what the conceptual framework needs is to open -- open the ways of looking with this different, more sophisticated idea of reality and the nonseparation of the *citta* (including the soul) and reality, the emptiness of all things, and the ways of looking, all kind of implicit together in that. So an idea that I already mentioned, an idea like participation -- this is a concept; it's also a perception that I can have. It's an experience. If you like, it's an imaginal perception. But where does imaginal perception shade into what we wouldn't consider imaginal perception, we would just consider perception? But an idea like participation -- for instance that this mind, my mind in its depths, is, if you like, rooted in or participates in the mind of the cosmos; not that it's just one with, but it participates in the mind of the cosmos, it expresses the mind of the cosmos, the divine mind, or that my imaginal faculty, the images that come to me, the images I perceive, either intra-psychically or of the world, these too are the imagination of the divine or the Buddha Nature or whatever. So I participate in the Buddha Nature through my imaginal perception. Or again the eros that I feel, and all that whole range and all the directions of my eros is -- we said this a few times -- I have the sense that I'm participating in the divine eros, in the eros of the Buddha with his consort, the consort with the Buddha. However we frame it there's some sense of this, of what I experience at one level as mine, is in another level mirroring, echoing, rooted in, originating in, and participating in the divine eros, the divine imaginal faculty, the divine imagination, the divine mind.

So that idea of participation or the set of ideas that we might call participation is an idea or set of ideas that actually supports and stimulates soulmaking. It brings more eros, more psyche, more image, gives imaginal dimension, opens imaginal dimension, and a stretching and a complicating of the logos, of the idea, so we get ideas that actually support and fertilise the soulmaking process. And therefore, it is a valuable idea. Why? Because it stimulates soulmaking. It supports and stimulates and gives more dimensionality etc. to the soulmaking movement and dynamic; therefore it is valuable and therefore it is valid. It's valid because it's valuable. Those words are actually related etymologically. It's valid because it's valuable and its value is that it stimulates what the soul loves, soulmaking. It stimulates that beauty, that richness, that opening, that fertility, that creativity, that discovery, all of that, and the multidimensionality of that.

It also includes, this idea of participation -- which this set of ideas called participation, it's part of a larger set of ideas which forms our conceptual framework or may be part of our conceptual framework -- but participation as a set of ideas also includes the understanding that we're not dealing with anything that has an independent existence. So we participate in perception. We participate in the world that's perceived, in the very perception of it. We participate in the divinity. We participate in actually anything. Intrinsic to the very idea of participation is the realisation that things are empty, that there are ways of looking, that our ways of looking are actually participatory. So what is seen, the way it appears, and the way of looking -- there's no independent existence implied in that.

So if I say, "This idea of participation in the divine, are you saying that's ultimately true?" First of all, it's not necessary to the soulmaking that we believe it's ultimately true. A lot of people -- sometimes this is very hard for people to understand. And I think it's intrinsic to a certain depth of soulmaking, because we realise image as image, we can actually also realise, if you like, idea as idea. I don't need to [say] "this is ultimately true!" in order for something to have its power, its efficacy, its capability and potency to open and to seed and fertilise our experience, our perception, our understanding, our heart, our soul, our minds, all of that, and our lives. Now actually if you go into this whole question of the whole meaning or exploration of participation, the very question "is it ultimately true?" crumbles because of what the idea is in itself. If we turn it the other way around, actually to claim the independent existence, the separate existence, separate from the way of looking, independent of the way of looking -- so not just talking about "yeah, you know, everything is physically connected to everything else"; independent of the way of looking, independent of the citta, if you like, separate from the citta -- to claim anything as independent in that way from the way of looking, separate from the citta, is actually I would say definitely not true. Any attempt at doing that so far in the history of humanity has been pretty seriously questioned and what one finds is it's actually very hard to construct a coherent conceptual framework on a ground of solidity, on a ground of independent existence, of something that's claimed to be independently existent.

The attempt, for example, in physics to derive everything from the basic building blocks of matter just comes round again, or so far has just come round again, to question the reality of those, the independent reality, independent of the way of looking, of those basic building blocks. We can't find them as independently existing things, independent of the way of looking. And Nagarjuna showed this even relative to Buddhist atomism. Brilliant critique exposing the impossibility of constructing a coherent conceptual framework on realist grounds. And again in modern western philosophy in recent years, so from different directions. It's almost like to have a grounding in a conceptual framework that's solid -- in terms of it gives a foundation, it has the effect of solidity -- our ground actually needs to be not solid. You understand? I can't get away with claiming the independent separate existence of anything, claiming that that's a truth, that anything exists independent, separate from the way of looking.

And then this idea set of ideas, what we're calling participation, it also intrinsically implies that this observation or acknowledgment that the way of looking both *discovers* and at the same time you could say *grants* sacredness to something or other -- I don't just discover it; we grant it. The way of looking grants it, or, if you like, we create it -- whether it's an image or eros or whatever. That whole admission and observation is not a problem within the idea of participation. So to me there's a more sophisticated ontology, and epistemology, and cosmology in fact -- metaphysics, if you like -- wrapped up in something like the idea of participation, which can sound at first like just abstract metaphysics with no grounding in anything real at all. So we go in to these things and actually really question, dare to question.

So there's a kind of pragmatism here, which again is quite a popular word in modern philosophy that

essentially states, well, you can kind of believe what works for you. There's a pragmatism of approach and of conceptuality here, but it's one that actually opens possibilities, possible new ways of looking, or the possibility of new ways of looking, and actually implements them, opens orientations, opens experiences, opens the living and opens the field of life for us, the field of our existence, the sense of existence, in ways that we actually move through. Sometimes what you get is a sort of what's called pragmatist philosophy, but all it does is, as I said before, is revert almost by default back to whatever was the default concept or ideation of ontology, epistemology, cosmology. Basically the default hidden metaphysics there. So can we have something that's pragmatic, meaning it's really practical, it's an idea or a set of ideas that is really actually practical, we actually live that opens opens a perception, opens up experience, opens up ideation, opens the heart, and all that, the soul.

I would say what is needed is some kind of conceptual framework some set of connected ideas that supports an ongoingness, a potential ongoingness of exploration, inquiry. It supports the opening of frontiers, creativity and discovery in all domains and in all aspects of our being, and even those domains and those aspects of being can also also get opened up and increased. In other words, we discover domains, we discover aspects of being, or we create them, or both. They are opened for us where before we had no sense that there was even that domain of being and that aspect of our existence. You understand? Some conceptual frameworks, some set of connected ideas that would support this fecundity of exploration, expansion, opening, this infinity of domains and dimensions and aspects of being, of existence -- not just the intellect, certainly not; not just the heart, not just the body; you know, the artistic, all of this, the soul. "Soul? What do you mean, soul?" It's a domain of the being. The way these open up, like what the body can be, what the heart can be, what the intellect can be -- in other words, how it can be *conceived*, not just the range of experiences there.

And so opening up also with all that a kind of potential infinitude of interpretations. Back to this hermeneutics, that existence, life, world, cosmos, being, humanity, body, all of this, materiality -- there's an infinitude of potential interpretations there. It's not constrained. It's not constricted. Through the participation itself, creating/discovering interpretations -- that is, if you like, the nature of existence, the nature of the cosmos. It's not limited. Infinitude of interpretations, the garden of infinite interpretations, the orchard of infinite interpretation. Infinite interpretations doesn't mean that any interpretation goes or that any interpretation is just as good as any other one. So I don't know if you know your mathematics of infinity; there's different kinds of infinity. So you can still have infinite interpretations, you can explore infinite interpretations theoretically at least, and still at the same time not explore a whole other infinite set. It's the nature of infinity. In other words -- I don't want to labour this but -- there are infinite even numbers and there are infinite odd numbers, so you can have infinite soulmaking interpretations, helpful interpretations and infinite unhelpful interpretations.

But to my way of thinking at the moment certainly, only that kind of conceptual framework would be philosophically viable and kind of legitimate or defensible, but more importantly only that kind of conceptual framework can satisfy soul. Only that kind of conceptual framework that's that fertile, that supports that ongoing expansion, complication, dimensionalising, etc., creativity/discovery, interpretation -- only that kind of conceptual framework can support that. Only a conceptual framework that can support that will satisfy soul.

What if actually we play with the idea of placing soulmaking, this movement of eros to stimulate the eros-psyche-logos dynamic, expansion, complication, widening, deepening, enrichment, all of that, what if that soulmaking -- actually we take that as a kind of a conception that can form a base for other explanations of all kinds of things? In other words, we take soulmaking as something kind of basic, kind of basic, just simply saying the soul wants (it has erotic desire for, in other words) soulmaking. It wants soulmaking. It wants expansion of soulmaking, the growth of soulmaking, the movement of

soulmaking in all directions and domains, potentially infinitely – eventually. In other words there's a movement in time here; there's a becoming. So it may happen in fits and starts, or with blocks and then explosions and walls crumbling, or just gradual expansion or whatever. Which is something basic. It sounds really simple. The soul wants, has an erotic desire for, the expansion of soulmaking in all directions and domains eventually, or eventually in all directions and domains.

So that, you know, the soulmaking in regard to the self, in regard to the beloved other or others, in regard to the world, becomes or is potentially equalised. Because the soul wants that soulmaking expansion in all directions and domains, this is its natural organic movement. So as imaginal and erotic objects, the other, the self, and the world are kind of equalised, balanced. They're all filled out. That the soulmaking movement is happening in all those directions. But also in the domains and the directions of body, heart, mind etc.. All these are expanded too, or the soul wants all these to be expanded: what the body is, how it can be perceived, what it means, what it can do, what it can feel, what it can sense, its ways of knowing -- the heart, the mind, all of this. Not that one is blocked or stuck or cramped; that would be a blocking, a stopping, a cramping of the whole eros psyche logos process, the whole soulmaking movement as we talked about earlier.

And so there are problems when one of these directions or domains or aspects of being, of existence, when one is blocked as an avenue of soulmaking or there's a stuckness there or it's cramped, something or other, the logos or the image or whatever is rigidified. That's when problems happen. Or there's an imbalance because one side is blocked, one direction is blocked, one aspect or domain is blocked. For example, the self is not equal -- either there's not the inclusion of the self as being filled out by the imaginal perception; or there's a preoccupation with the self and then not filling out and not attending to the other as imaginal object, erotic object; or the world is not included. What happens to our relationship with nature when we lose the eros and the sense of dimensionality of the natural world? What happens when we objectify another? In other words, when they lose that dimensionality, that we lose the eros there. Maybe there's still metta. We talked about this before. But somehow I've objectified them. What happens?

As I said, what happens, for example, if our notion of flesh or materiality or the body, that soulmaking erotic involvement with flesh, with body, is not allowed in some way or another? So that actually our sense and our concept and our perception of flesh and body is stuck at one level, maybe of one-dimensionality, maybe of whatever it is. "It is this," "it's good for that," "it's not good for this," "it's this or that." And to me this is a really interesting exploration, just to play with the idea or the notion, or entertain and experiment a little bit with placing soulmaking as a really fundamental or a kind of fundamental idea or movement in the whole of our way of thinking about psychology and spirituality and path and all that. So for instance it's quite interesting for me to think about, to reconsider, human developmental psychology -- I won't go into this a lot, I'll just mention something just as a start in case someone at some point wants to pick this up.

Freud regarded pleasure seeking as the fundamental drive of the human being, and that's, if you like, that's what eros meant to him. And problems arose when there was a conflict between those drives for pleasure, often sexual, and gratification of sense pleasure were blocked or inhibited by or needed to be inhibited by culture and society and parenting and what not. So there was a whole developmental psychology that actually placed what he called eros, which is the pleasure seeking, at the fundament. Half a century or so later W.R.D. Fairbairn, a Scottish psychoanalyst in the Freudian lineage, loosely speaking, in what's called the British object relations school. He actually said the fundamental movement is object seeking. His word for that is libido rather than eros. And this is what the infant, the baby, seeks -- an object, the other. And really what's fundamental, the fundamental drive, is to connect with others. So not, as Freud says, sense-pleasure, gratification of sense-pleasures, or the reduction of

the tension in the drives towards sense-pleasure etc... Fairbairn proposed this what he was calling libidinal drive, this connecting with others. That was the primary thing. And then there was an anti-libidinal -- I'm going to come back to this later on in the retreat -- anti-libidinal drive that got kind of constellated there which was to protect one from the disappointment or pain of rejection by the object that we sought or the unavailability of that object. So these can get internalised as well -- the object and the libidinal drives etc. in his theory, but what's fundamental is the connection with others.

Nowadays it's quite popular to consider, oh, you know, in the womb there was a state of oneness and wholeness, non-differentiation from the mother in that environment, sort of oceanic state of oneness & bliss & non-separation, and then at birth there's the trauma of the separation into differentiated being in the world and the trauma of separation from the oneness, which is a great shock to the system. And the whole production of the self-sense, the construction of the self-sense, is really a force for coherence, for delimitation -- "I stop here" -- for boundaries whose function is to protect against, if you like, a dissolution into oneness. You're actually creating boundaries because the memory of oneness is full of this sense of trauma at the birth separation. And then for others, for instance the Kohut ego psychology is really -- in developmental psychology what it sets out to achieve is exactly this well-boundaried self. A kind of coherent, well-boundaried self, that's the fundamental achievement of psychological health and maturity.

So there's lots of -- and there's more. But it's interesting to me, like, what if we conceived of eros as we've been speaking about it, and soulmaking as the fundamental drive, not pleasure seeking? That's connected. We mean more than pleasure seeking, which is Freud's thing. We would also mean more than the object as Fairbairn would have it (which sounds very like ours -- connecting with others, isn't that what we defined eros with? The connection, this wanting more connection?) But there are differences there because the other, the object-seeking, the object that Fairbairn's child or theoretical child infant seeks, is automatically assumed to be a kind of fixed, well-defined, stable, limited object/person -- admittedly complex; we recognise that -- but not infinite, not full of other dimensions, possibly infinite and imaginal dimensions and potentially divine and all that.

In our way we've been talking on this retreat, eros is not equivalent to a movement or force towards oneness and dissolution in oneness which somehow needs to be protected against. Actually eros, as we've said, organically creates and retains an otherness, some degree of separation of self and other and distinction between self and other. So Kohut's idea of achieving the well-boundaried self needn't be fundamental either; it's just partly what happens in the soulmaking process. Eros will kind of create some sense of division there, some sense of boundary of self. So I'm just touching on this really to open something up for future investigation really. But there's -- I don't know how this sounds; the distinction is subtle, but I would say quite significant. We're so used to thinking about developmental psychology in other terms that become almost entrenched for psychologists, but I just wonder what would happen if we thought about eros in the way we're talking about it and soulmaking in the way we're talking about it as really the fundamental drive, if you like. What would that imply with respect to a construction of developmental psychology? And how would we think about various pathologies that human beings have, whatever it is, in relation to that, in relation to that framework?

So the way that we're kind of conceiving of the object that is sought is different that what Fairburn would think, and the sense of the self also is certainly different that what Kohut would kind of regard of as the achievement. And implicit in what we're saying is this recognition of image as image. All that is a natural part of the soulmaking dynamic. The question is, which one of these get blocked and how and at what point and in what direction? So the soulmaking movement, as I said, doesn't lead to a dissolution of the self or a reification of the self: "It's really important to have a sense of a real self before you can let go of it" -- it's almost like a dogma. Is that really the problem? It doesn't reify self or

object, but that might be a stage in the soulmaking process. These aspects of the other, a sort of object conceived just less dimensionally, less imaginally pregnant, if you like, might just be a stage, and Kohut's stage of the achievement of the psychologically boundaried coherent self, that's just a stage of the soulmaking process, maybe.

Again, I'm just sort of playing with something, but it's quite an interesting thing to start thinking about if you're interested in these kind of things. And again, so much of what we consider or what a lot of a modern psychology considers the self -- which there is quite a range in that ideation or concept -- but, you know, just to see how relative it is to western modernist culture as I said before. Ernst Cassirer who wrote a whole series of books, "The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms" I think is the big title, he talks about the Bataks of Sumatra. For them the self was sort of in relationship with a spirit particular, peculiar to that self, I think it was called a [?]; I can't remember. And it's sort of within the person but not really, and it's separate from the ego, from their I. And there can be all kinds of conflicts. So this is not the coherent unfragmented self of Kohut etc. And this was regarded as normal, this is what a person involves. So there's the person, and there's this spirit that's kind of in relationship with them, and there can be conflict: the person wants one thing, the ego wants one thing, and the spirit wants another. But there's something of a power that this spirit has in determining the character and even the future of that person. Certain notions of what's healthy etc. are just actually products of modernist western culture which we take for reality and don't question often.

What would it be also, if we consider developmental psychology -- and I've touched on this in other talks in the past -- it's like we tend to think the past causes the present and causality just runs from the past. We look for the first causes and we look for the conditions and the environment or the trauma or this and that, and it's moving that way from the past to present. What if causality actually opens? A whole sense of causality that doesn't just come from the past, that in some way we are called to something in the future. It also comes from the present and dependent origination. And what's causal is not simply what manifests on a material level in a kind of simply human dimension. So in other words, this notion that the Bataks have in Sumatra of some non-material entity, if you like, being actually quite causative. What is served and what is not served and in fact lost when we constrain our notions of causality? Not just the notions of self, but the notions of causality, as well. "This is healthy, and this is healthy thinking, and this is what a healthy self is, and this is how the self should be," etc..

So then considering, thinking about, certain pathologies or the various kinds of pathology, the range of pathologies that can occur for human beings -- which of course is related to developmental psychology -- we tend to think of pathology, oftentimes, not always, as related to development and child psychology and what may be arrested or incomplete development in some way or another. But beginning to think about that -- and really this is just an opening, a sort of pointing at a direction, as I said, but I think it can be quite fruitful -- but beginning to think about pathologies. And we've touched on this already. What happens if the imaginal dimension is available to be opened in a certain direction, for instance in relation to other but not in relation to self, or in relation to self but not in relation to other, and there's a kind of lop-sidedness to the soulmaking opening and movement there? What would that cause? What causes that, for a start/ But also what would that then result in, that kind of lop-sidedness? What would it result in in the child psychology, in the developmental psychologies, what kind of pathologies if it becomes a long-term kind of habitual mode of being, of seeing, to be lopsided in that way or lopsided in that way or blocked in a certain direction of imaginal filling out?

Or again, as we've mentioned, all this, we can see it mirrored in our moment to moment meditative explorations, but what if this gets repeated and becomes a kind of a way of being in the world, not seeing image as image, not understanding this is image: I see this image and it is image? What happens if there's that kind of reification? Of course that's actually quite common, but we don't tend to realise

that, so that in the culture and education there's this real push: make sure the child knows what reality is, and a fear of the imagination that it lingers too much except in very contained directions (perhaps in art class or whatever, or you know theatre at school or something like that). But this real almost fear of the imagination, so kind of squash the imagination and really emphasise something called reality. Maybe healthy psychology actually, or even a situation as we've been talking about, the imaginal dimension needs to be allowed more, amplified more, explored more, opened to and opened.

Again, it's a very different way of thinking about psychology, developmental psychology, pathology etc. And I wonder, do children, does an infant, does a child really believe her or his images and confuse them with reality? When children are playing this does not seem to me to be the case. There's a fear about that as if we need to prevent the imaginal growing. I wonder if actually we can *trust* the human psyche to see image as image, to understand the image as image. In its natural development, that will be part of what it understands, if it is allowed to, if it's supported to, unless it's subject to some kind of pressure of fundamentalist dogma -- and that can be what seems to be to us a very obvious fundamentalist dogma, some kind of religious fundamentalism of not seeing an image as image, or much more hard to see for us because it's totally woven in to our culture and we don't even see it.

So that's interesting, too. Not seeing an image as an image is regarded as relatively ok if most people around me agree to see it that way and agree to see it as this is reality, it's not an image. So if my whole community is not seeing this image -- shares some image and doesn't see this image as an image, it's somehow deemed psychologically ok. From outside of that community it looks really pathological, bonkers, dangerous etc.. But I wonder if there's this, as I said, natural, organic movement of the psyche to understand the imaginal and to see it as image, if it's allowed to, if it's supported to, if it's not subject to the pressures of fundamentalism or some kind of logos or whatever that doesn't allow that.

So again when we think of pathology -- and just kind of stating on a bigger scale what we've explored in the kind of moment to moment meditative questions a little bit, meditative navigation, you know -- if we think about the eros psyche logos dynamic, expansion, mutual fertilisation etc., where can that get blocked or out of balance? Is it the logos? Is it the image getting stuck somewhere or rigidly identified, not seeing image as image? Is it in the direction of the self, or the other, of the world, of the eros itself, or the love, or of something like the body? So the body is related to in a way that doesn't get imaginally filled out. Might be all kinds of belief in an image of the body or an idea of the body, or the eros has got stuck in relation to the body. Something's imbalanced, something's blocked. In that whole kind of circular mandala where everything wants to move in all directions, something gets blocked in the eros, in the psyche, in the logos, in the image of the self, the other, the world, the eros, the body, whatever it is, not seeing image as image, and there comes the pathologies out of that, there comes the incomplete or arrested development out of that, perhaps. As I said, just some ideas to throw out, I think interesting to reflect on and maybe fruitful.

Ok, and lastly just to touch on something that I've touched on before. To my mind, we want and perhaps in the kinds of concepts that we're talking about, in the conceptual framework that we're unfolding here with the soulmaking and the explanation of the soulmaking dynamic and what's involved there, we need and perhaps we have a conceptual framework that implies -- already implicit in it -- it insists, if you like, that eros and soulmaking will always elude our final understanding. They are always more than we can ever understand. Why? Because the eros, because the pothos in the eros always wants more of whatever it comes into relationship with as an erotic object, and stimulates the eros psyche logos dynamic to create/discover more, always more. So expanding, opening, stretching, breaking the boundaries of anything it comes into contact with in creating and discovering more of that thing, including not just psyche and soul but eros itself and whatever logos or idea is involved with the notion of psyche or the notion of eros. So whatever idea of it, those boundaries -- and ideas are

delineations; they make boundaries -- but they also will be broken open, expanded, stretched etc., just because of the eros psyche logos dynamic. It will eventually move in the direction of eros and the direction of soul itself. Rather it will include them in its whole kind of expanding vortex of movement, involvement, of digestion, of transformation, transubstantiation, creation/discovery.

So in a way this whole idea of the eros psyche logos movement and process and involvement means that any logos, any idea, will expand or break in time. In time it will crack. And to paraphrase Leonard Cohen, "There's a crack in everything, that's where the light comes in". So we might think of that in terms of our broken heart, or our imperfections, but we can also just as much apply it to the ideas, to logoi, to conceptual frameworks. So implicit in the way that we're talking about the soulmaking dynamic and eros psyche logos and all that is this idea of the Kabbalistic idea of the breaking of the vessels we mentioned before (the *Shevirat haKeilim*). It will break. And the crack is a blessing. The light comes in. In other words, there's an illumination. There's a further expansion. Something of the divine -- if we amplify that -- the light of the divine comes in via the crack. We will reach a point with any idea, with any concept or framework, where it won't be able to contain or account for our experience or new ideas or whatever, new observations -- the very idea of the eros psyche logos dynamic, maybe that too, that too. It's interesting as an idea, though, because it includes within it this idea of the breaking of the vessels, of the cracks, because of what it implies about expansion.

And actually, I mean, there are already cracks, if you like, in this idea -- let's say structural weaknesses, circularities -- as there must be with any conceptual framework actually. Is that a problem? Maybe theory, conceptual framework, theory, is more theatre. Theory is theatre more than reality or truth. Theory is theatre. I don't actually think those words are etymologically related but let's put them together imaginally. Theory is theatre. What does that mean? It's theatre. Theatre, actually etymologically has to do with the gods, *theos* I think. I'm not sure. But that would be interesting too. Theory is part of divine theatre. The question is not about its reality and truth, but what is it serving? What is it serving, a theory, a conceptual framework? We've already said soulmaking, serving soulmaking. And the theory itself is part of soul. The logos is part of what we're calling soul and soulmaking. So in a way, we discover a conceptual framework based on our observations and our deductions from that. But we create it, you could say we forge it, with the double implication of what that word means. We forge a conceptual framework. We are forging a conceptual framework. And theory is theatre. So this is a very, to me, a whole notion of concept that's soulmaking, that's fertile, to me. Beautiful as well.