Meditation

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 3, Session 5 — 29 minutes

Summary: While the group settles, Russell tells a Zen story in which a clumsy brother's answers in Dharma combat are heard as a profound teaching on oneness and duality. He then guides a sitting to invite a life-giving quality, feel it and its opposite in the body, and recall it through a sensory-rich memory and gesture.

Introduction

While we're waiting, I'll tell you a funny story — a story that I love anyway.

I was talking about whole and all and the importance of differentiation, right?

So in classical language, they talk about oneness and duality, oneness and duality, and how some people really side with — they just want to be in the one. It's just such a joy to be in the one. They don't want to deal with the messiness of relationship, right?

We know that part in us that's just — oh, just — right?

And then the world of duality has its own gift. But if we don't also have a feeling for the oneness, it can get a little dry, get a little incomplete.

So oneness and duality is like that integration and differentiation.

So there's the story of this famous Zen master who had a brother who was, gently and in a friendly way, always referred to as his stupid brother. And he just couldn't do anything right.

His brother was the famous abbot of this place, and the younger brother couldn't do anything right. He had an eye patch and he had a limp, and he would just have to do all the little tasks, because he just — he was not really smart and couldn't understand any of the doctrines.

He couldn't really meditate, and he was a very friendly, sweet guy, but couldn't get anything really right.

So one day, the famous abbot leaves to go to another temple for a ceremony, and his brother was the only other monk around, so he said to his brother, "You're in charge while I'm going."

He goes, "Oh, in charge."

So, of course, older brother leaves, and the younger brother is there, and there's a knock on the door.

He goes, and there's a traveling monk. And in this crazy world of Zen, there's a practice — we call it, that still exists today — called Dharma combat.

And Dharma combat is you're basically putting your understanding in the ring with another person's understanding, and they're usually kind of short, quick. And you see who has a deeper, clearer, more profound realization.

In the old days, the traveling monks would either get a night's sleep, food, and a place to stay, or not, depending on if they won the Dharma contest. So it was a little serious in bad weather and stuff like that.

"I'd like to challenge the abbot to Dharma combat."

And the younger brother says, "Well, my brother's not here, but I'm the abbot for the day. Come."

And so there he's limping in with his eye patch on, and they sit down at the table. And the visiting monk is sitting looking at him with his very present fierce gaze, and the brother's trying to kind of look back, you know, feeling uncomfortable.

And then finally, the visitor says — my brother's gonna scare me, so he goes.

For the visiting monk, immediate response.

And the brother is just sitting there, shaking his head, and he finally looks like this. And he's about to get up when the man leaves. He leaves, goes up the road, and runs into the famous abbot brother coming down the road.

And the visitor says to the abbot, "Are you going to that center? It's quite an abbot there. He looks a little strange, but his realization is quite profound."

He said, "What did he look like?"

"Well, he had an eye patch and a limp."

I said, "My brother — what happened?"

So the visitor said, "Well, I said, all is one. And so he appropriately said, duality is true too. So I said, well, oneness and duality go together. And then he said, and it's all one. It's all one."

"And this is a profound teaching, because I was getting stuck in the difference between oneness and duality, and I thought they were together, but I still had them separate, because I was putting them together, but he showed me, in that one moment, how they were all one."

So he leaves, and the brother goes back, and he sees his younger brother, and his younger brother is saying, "Where's that guy who was just here? I want to kill him."

"You want to kill him? He was very impressed with you."

"I want to kill him."

"Well, what happened?"

"We sat down. I was being really nice, and so he said to me, 'You only have one eye.' So I wanted to compliment him, and I said, 'Yeah, but you have two.' So he said, 'Yeah, but between us, we only have three.' So I said, 'I'm gonna kill him.'"

So it's a great story about perception and reality, right, and unity, and the one and the many, and the conversations we think we're having.

Okay.

Sitting

So, I invite you to sit comfortably. Let's do this process.

Sitting, you can lean against the wall, you can sit in the chair. Be comfortable, but be vertical.

Do you need something to write with? Nope, you won't need anything to write with.

And I invite you to close your eyes. Let your feet come to the floor if you're sitting in a chair.

If your feet don't reach the floor comfortably, put a mat under you.

And just the feeling that you can be supported by the chair. Settle into the chair.

Settle onto your seat, and I recommend that you close your eyes, if that's comfortable. Most people go inside a little easier that way.

And just let your attention come to being in the seat, feeling the contact of your bottom, sensing your feet and what they're touching, your hands and what they're touching, hearing the sounds that are around you, so you're here in a body and in a space.

Sensing the breath as it comes in and goes out. Feel some movement of breath.

And begin to bring attention into your inner body, inside your throat and chest, inside your belly, lower belly, the places we tend to feel things, where your inner life resonates.

And as you're in there, invite your inner life to bring to you a quality, any quality that it wants to grow currently in your life.

And I'll give you examples in a moment. So any life-giving quality that you're conscious of, that you would like to have arise spontaneously, more regularly, where without effort, this we could call quality of being, would arise.

And you can have your own language for that. Examples are things like more connectedness, more presence, more compassion, more acceptance, kindness, lovingness, more receptivity.

But you're really letting your inner life — give it a few moments. There's probably lots that it would love. And see what it's kind of working on now. What's it growing?

And you may be surprised, so it might be something that you haven't even thought of that pops in.

If you're just gonna rest, it might be that a few things come, and you're gonna kind of taste each of them a little bit for a little while.

So, give you a little bit of time to see what might really like the invitation to grow.

If you have a few qualities that are seeking attention, just see which has the most energy right now. We'll have time to go back to other qualities at another time.

Let's see, what quality might — if this could arise spontaneously in your life with greater frequency, that's what's being called for.

Keeping your eyes closed, lift a hand if you need some more time or some more guidance in finding.

Great.

Right.

[Silence 2 minutes]

If you have such a quality, just invite your body to show you what it feels like when this quality is alive in you.

Listen in chest, belly.

[Silence 35 seconds]

Invite your inner life to recall a time when you have felt this quality, and recall —

It could be a specific moment where this quality was alive, or it might be a kind of combination of moments that happened with a particular person, or in a particular place, or doing a particular activity.

Sometimes memories are just one moment, and sometimes they're a combination of moments that are connected.

Let that memory grow in a sensory-rich way.

So if it's a combination of memories — let's say it was a number of times being in the woods — you can create one moment out of that, as long as it feels true in your body.

So notice, are you outside or inside? Let the memory come to you. If it's not clear, just let something come. You may be surprised by it, or it may be already known where you are.

If you're outside, what's the landscape like?

Letting it form, inviting it. If you're inside, where's the furniture? The doors, the windows?

Let it be a specific place, even if that place didn't actually exist, but it could have. It's like the place feels like it.

And are you alone, or are you with others or another?

Keep growing the scene in a sensory-rich way, where this quality was there.

And notice how your body moves or sits, or how your physical body is, when this quality is alive in this moment.

And if you lose contact, just — that's okay, just come back to it.

And notice what it feels like inside your chest, inside your belly, in a moment where this is alive.

I'm glad to be here.

See if there's more that might like to be known about the way this feels, maybe some subtle sensations in the background. How it feels to be you in a moment like this.

What's your sense of space?

What else you can notice about the embodiment of this kind of moment, and what feels to be you?

As you're with this, we're going to just briefly put it aside. Stay inside.

Allow your body to show you what it feels like when the opposite of this quality is alive in you, because you know that as well.

Let yourself just experience briefly what happens in your chest, in your belly, when this quality is absent — this quality that you're growing — and this other place is here.

What happens? How does it take over your body?

Be as specific as you can about what happens in your chest, belly, in your throat, face. In your rhythm, in your breathing, in your overall sense of yourself.

Thank your body for showing you that. We really want to know this — these signs, these indicators — and then invite back the life-giving quality that you're cultivating, that you're growing.

Invite it back by going to the scene where you felt it.

Create that scene again in a sensory-rich way.

If you're with another person, bring them there. If you're touching them, bring that there. If you're walking a particular path, bring that in a sensory-rich way. Let your body have those building blocks, so it can really form who you are when this state is alive.

And notice, if you invite your hands and arms to move — if they would like to move — to show you a gesture that embodies this quality.

Let your hands and arms move. Invite them to, so they can show you, and you can be surprised by what they do, to show you what this quality feels like in a gesture.

And just take another moment or two to feel what are the most important bodily sensations that let you know this state is here.

So see if you can find what are the ways it feels to be you, so you can have access to this quality.

Let your body show you how it is when it has this.

Identify two or three key sensations.

Find one, two, three, or four key words or images that can help. It's almost like giving it a tag or a reference line or a place for storage. What's this called? What are the key two, three, four words or images that can remind you of this quality?

How it manifests.

It's like my son.

You'll have an opportunity to return here. For now, just take a moment to thank your body that all this is living in it.

The capacity for memory, connected to sensation and feeling, is alive in you. Even if you only felt it a little, that's okay.

Let your inner self, your inner body, know that you will be back to help grow these life-giving qualities.

That's your intention and commitment to growing your inner life.

And then slowly, please let your attention come back to just sitting here, feeling yourself here, feeling your feet, sensing your hands.

Hearing the sound, letting your eyes open.

[Silence 41 seconds]

Let's stay in silence, and please set up your mats on the floor and lie down.