Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 3, Session 3 — 49 minutes

Summary: People share where they are in practice and life: gratitude, letting go of indoctrination, the difficulty of daily practice, free fall without ground, striving beside contentment, space beyond the skin, and grief for a burning planet. Russell tells of a student who hated slow walking, guides a brief radiating of goodwill, and readies the room for blindfolds.

Sharing

[Russell:] Excellent. Thank you for helping us get into harmony with you.

So, let's see, who would like to speak, who has not spoken, who would like to speak?

[Silence 36 seconds]

[Participant 1:] Sensations. And pleasant.

I feel a lot of gratitude for all the sharing, and people who moved me through so many places. It was quite a day of holding my own — speech, talking, sharing — to kind of be with all those places, and thinking I might share at any time, but I didn't. And so it's an interesting place.

And found that everyone's uttering really brought forth another aspect of my experience. So I'm really grateful for all that work moving through me, and that I came to gratitude as the place, which my first place would have been much more grumbly.

I feel so, because that was a real aspect that did come to me in our meditation yesterday — a sense of joy and gratitude for how things are integrating, the aspects that are positive that are growing and changing. And I like that being the point of my arrow.

When I think of those three places we talked about, right now I'm getting this image of a point of an arrow.

The first place, when I thought about where I was on my path — the words and sensations of letting go, and the unknown, were very clear. And what I'm dealing with letting go of is indoctrination. Both of the Buddhist path that I've been exploring since I was 20 years old, so that's 58. I liked trying that. It's nice to be surprised that a few years ago I loved the way — you know, the Buddhist path. Wow.

But I think even way before that, it was this heavy-duty Christian thing that I didn't exactly have in my immediate life. In fact, my parents sort of ignored it, but it was genetic. My grandparents were fanatical Pentecostals. You know, I never met them really. But I kind of had it by way of my parents rejected it. But culturally — and so I feel like there's such a strong — that word is the word I came with, indoctrination.

And it's very scary, because, you know, I might get crucified, burned at the stake, you know, for letting go of some of that.

As you were speaking this morning about those beliefs, assumptions, things that kind of get drilled into you in a certain way, and I, being a ready vessel for that, looking for the cure. So I'm very aware of that, my responsibility, and appreciating everywhere I get to feel it.

Sometimes it's too heavy. But like yesterday, it was very heavy, this feeling of letting go. But by the end of the day, after sitting through so much deep work, that place of, oh, it's just another story. It's just another void. Welcome at this table. Why not?

There was such a lightening. And an opening. And joy and gratitude.

Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you, Kara. Barbara.

[Participant 2:] I'm gonna talk real fast because — no. I felt so sad to miss again, this second time in a row, the first day. And it was really great to hear the sharing. But it's okay, you know, it's really okay.

The table is safe, and however it helps me to hear other people, so that I can then feel safe. So I feel a little vulnerable when I share this, but my practice is really a challenge for me. It doesn't come easy.

It's not right and wrong. It's absolutely just full, and it's very right when I do practice. And I notice that it's probably been with me throughout my life.

Although it's interesting, because I was a devout Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist for 10 years, and that's a pretty strict set, where twice a day you sit and follow the recipe, and I barely ever missed a time. And it reminded me of Catholicism by the time we let it go, because I felt like, oh, if I don't do this, something bad is gonna happen.

So this practice — I love being with everyone. I love being together. It's very easy for me to sit and to practice. I wish I could find that to be easier, you know, in my life.

So, you know, we have probably a large community in Bend, Oregon, but for some reason — you know, and it's meant to be — we somehow haven't been able to get together. And so I am a seeker, and especially now I am a seeker, as I'm working in some major stuff.

And so I'm appreciative for this table. So glad I'm here. And they canceled the flight. I thought, oh, you're not supposed to go. But I'm here.

Sure. Anybody else struggles with —

[Russell:] Hello, Valerie. Bruno's resting, yeah.

Thank you. So we did some standing movements, some conversation about what came up in the standing movements. Now we're completing the sharings, where we are in our practice and life, and one's gonna get the ball.

[Silence 30 seconds]

[Participant 3:] So grateful for how — hot off the press — there's an invitation to see what's alive in there now.

That really resonated with what Kara was saying about that feeling of — touching in with all these different aspects of my being and my experience, as reflected through all of you. Like mine — so, have you been missed — all these different reflections coming in, just how much moved and how much was unearthed, just by hearing your descriptions of where you are.

And then it feels like another aspect of this space thing, that there really is this oneness that's really palpable.

In terms of my practice right now, this line from Trungpa came up that I love. The bad news is that you're free falling through the air, and there's no parachute, and no one's going to catch you. And the good news is there's no ground.

It's all embodied life. There's been this sort of unearthing of what's really life-giving in terms of practice and life. I'm grateful to be just here.

And there's also this, just in coming here, in this first day slash week as it seems. I feel more myself. I feel like there's this boost of, oh, here's where I might be a little bit further down the path, kind of a highlight or something.

There's a real movement toward wanting to have more of this integrated into my life, integrated more into my work. Just to be there more spontaneously.

And there's a question that's alive, in terms of something that came up in a conference — I think the larger group call — about that notion of, I think you used the Rudolf Steiner word, striving.

And just holding this: okay, there's this striving to make this more my home. More than in the work, and skills can be developed. And just also, how striving can so easily skid me off something that's closer than my own skin.

You know, that if there's something that's really — how not to skip over just the contentment, or the beingness, or the lack of need to change at all. How to hold those two.

That's something I'm really interested in, in terms of integration and in deepening this — how to hold that there's something that can unfold, and there's something that can't be improved.

Yeah. So happy to hear the closeness. And it's funny, because love has been a word in spiritual practice, so it's like, oh, love. You know, there's something that's moved away from that in Embodied Life work. I'm really noticing that there was something missing in my practice, like love.

And it's so clear in the way that we've been listening to each other, and the way we are. I was so touched by being outside, picking persimmons, and there was just so much love there, between and in the interactions. And grateful for that.

[Russell:] Thank you, Carl.

[Participant 4:] Very fitting. So I've really been struck by, and so myself grateful for, the lightness and energy, and that everybody here shares this explorer in them, which I'm drawn to in so many ways, and I feel I am one myself.

And it's something that is important in my life. And when I look at this ball, like several other people mentioned, it's really fitting, because I was coming on a plane over here, and I was just like, I love to go. And I was just in awe, and thinking, not for the first time, yeah, one thing I really, really like to do is be an astronaut. It was just — I love to go fast.

When Barbara was talking about — you know, you talked about slowing down, and then Barbara talked about wanting to go faster in the walking meditation, and I certainly felt that.

And this week I — I mean, I can imagine measuring. You know, symbols going on all over. And the concept of space for me has been very big in the last year and a half.

After a friend suggested, and I was really feeling something caught, like a cement block really in my chest. And she suggested that, well, you know, is there someplace else it could go? I just couldn't. So I reached. And I thought, oh, that's different.

And over time, just thinking about that so differently, and then it does — this isn't the end of me. This skin, this bone, and that space. These exercises and lessons we've been doing the last two days have been building on that new concept for me.

That has been an intention. I want to flow. I want it in my energy. It just doesn't have to be contained.

Which also — this space, and the energy, and containment, and my love of exploration, is not just a geographical thing, but it's been a mind-body thing through it. Everybody here has been a partner in that for me. It's this really wonderful, exciting adventure.

And I feel the support and the camaraderie, and it's just very heartwarming. And that's a few great things.

[Russell:] Thank you, Sarah.

Before we move to the next person, I just have to tell a story that came this morning. So I got an email from an Embodied Life graduate who's teaching in Germany. A very lovely woman. Hope you meet her someday.

And she said, "You remember, Russell, when I wanted to kill you for how slow the walking meditation was? And you remember, Russell, at the last segment when I said, 'I finally love it.' Well, I have a student who wants to kill me. What do I do?"

Just this morning. I started to write. I said, "That's your job as a teacher. To let them want to kill you."

Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. You never know. Hopefully, they don't kill you.

So, who else has not spoken?

[Participant 5:] Only the world. Well, cosmos. I haven't spoken, I'll take it. I have no idea what I want to talk about. And I think in the middle of the night I do. That's one.

[Russell:] Thanks, Monica. Thanks.

[Participant 6:] I'm in another kind of sangha where we're exploring Buddhist texts and getting really excited, and a point of view of really finding out more about ourselves. And it's incredibly informative, let me tell you.

And so the combination of that study and this study is just simply — enabling me to be alive in this human skin, frame, existence, and find some meaning in being human, which I do struggle with periodically, much less than I used to.

And I feel that challenge of this thing of being human rising up again, in a slightly different way, in that I've now completed my Feldenkrais training. I'm not in that kind of cocoon of being a student for four years and doing other things as well, but that was my structure.

And now I want to find a way. How do I offer this thing called Feldenkrais meaningfully, or just as part of what I'm here to do — find a way to broaden its scope, its offering.

So combining it with meditation and talking, Focusing work, to get to know her in a light more explicitly, with the other ones, after they really support each other — this, in terms of getting to know who I am and what's going on.

It feels right, but it feels like a beginning too. It feels like — I don't know. Just, I guess, more of the seeking of how can this really be useful? What more needs to be discovered? And just that, to be an open question that's there all the time.

And things have been found in that seeking. It's not seeking for — it doesn't feel like it anyway — seeking, just seeking. The sense is, you know, that thing of never finding the answers, just always seeking. It doesn't feel like that.

And so somehow all of this permeates my practice, which is not just sitting on a cushion or a chair. For me, my practice is increasingly about how I integrate it in my daily life, how I bring it into how I relate to people I'm in contact with.

And it's more than that, and I can feel tears coming, because I'm feeling a lot of grief about the planet right now. And I think it's been sitting there. I'm not deliberately trying to push down my grief about my concern for the planet, but I'm trying to find a way to be useful with my concern for the planet.

And I think the fact that Australia is experiencing really terrible fires again — they're not just wildfires, they're fucking awful wildfires. They're wiping out flora and fauna, and yes, humans are part of that too.

But I have this sense that Australia could become uninhabitable. So if I'm right, then I'm on the list for the next environmental refugees, you know.

And I just know that we can turn this around. There'll be species lost. Can't do anything about that, but we don't have to let this happen.

So I'm feeling, I guess, that may have risen to the surface again because now the training's over. I need to move into, what am I going to use to offer what I have, and continue my learning. And I seem to be this crazy human being who doesn't want to live in — what the fuck do I do with that?

And it feels right. It doesn't really feel wrong. It's just I don't know how to talk back to anybody, because no one knows, you know, what to say to me, I suppose. They think something's very real about it all.

And that's good for my practice too, you know. To teach students, support myself. Very weird.

So hence not really being fair about what I have to say to you, or myself, at the moment. There's so much that I'm looking at and exploring. I'm wanting to stay true to myself in this weirdness, and really allow it to inform me about who the hell I am in all of that, you know?

And how can I usefully be on this planet in this weirdness? What has it got to offer?

I think I've just gotta step into the big black hole and be done with it, you know. I kind of do it a lot, but I come back, and when I go back in and go back, I think I've just gotta — and see what happens.

[Silence 39 seconds]

[Russell:] Valerie.

[Participant 7:] The word mama. Wouldn't ya? I don't know.

I'll call it excitement, I feel. Energized. Very full. And the word soft is there, and grateful.

I just — just being here with all of you, and sorry to have missed this morning's series, but almost feeling like I probably would. I just feel so surrounded. I mean, I can feel a pulse through me that is so sustaining. So I'm so grateful. You know that it's there, for the times that it's not there.

And in the last bits, I've been noticing in life — my way of organizing in the world is to tighten around things, and if I can do it, it's okay. And I even feel the sense that I want to put the world down. I thought, no, I want to have the experience that I can hold the world that lightly.

And yesterday, with everyone's wonderful sharings, this vision of myself tacking up this little scaffolding around life and myself, and that was called stability.

And I've been asking myself the question of how to have more light, how to be more light in the world. And I gravitate to light. I've been very blessed to be in some incredible situations, but I kind of have fear that there might not be light in there.

So what I felt like yesterday was, you're not leaving enough air, and the candle is getting snuffed out. So if I can just let a little permeability there, then maybe I'll find it inside too.

So, anyway. Thank you.

What's living here

[Russell:] Maybe just a moment of feeling how you experience, throughout yourself, throughout your body, what's living here. And if it feels right to just have moments of sharing what feels life-giving and positive, with just an image of some of the beings in your world.

No formal anything, just kind of including — may they — if you have some sense of gratitude, or the touchedness, or the love, or the lightness, or whatever qualities seem life-giving, to share that.

It always wants to be shared, or it stays alive. It's a great irony: to have it, we need to give it away.

To even include some of the more anonymous beings in your world, the postal person, or the people caring for us here that you don't know so well.

Just radiating your best wishes for their fulfillment, for their satisfaction, for their sense of being connected to life, sustained, supported. These are universal longings. You don't have to tell them exactly, any particular way, but those are universal. Feel connected, feel supported.

Feel at home in this world.

[Participant 8:] I would like to share that, well, many people who support me being here — that yesterday, the extraordinary interactions that distinguished my sharing continue to mean an awful lot for me, and I appreciate very much.

[Russell:] Just a few more moments. That you sense, I'm here on this spot, that we can feel the physical location, the I am here, and then we can have the space around us.

We have a sense of I'm here. We can have that spatial sense, this kind of permeability to the world, just as the air comes in and out of us. Our bodies are permeable.

And it's like this very subtle, etheric thread going out and turning around, back towards the one sitting here. So filling that whole space.

And I wonder if there can be a sense of I'm here and there, or the here and there live together.

When one has that larger looking back — whether we think of it as our true self, or larger self, or our being, or another being, a being, a friend — the sense that there is goodwill radiating, that we are surrounded.

Let's see, we can have this sense of I'm here. If that — we invite that and we see what happens.

And let it be very light, almost effortless in your attention.

What makes meditation hard is when we try to do it from the inside.

[Silence 44 seconds]

Resting in this larger space, as one is right here on this spot.

[Silence 32 seconds]

And let your eyes open.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Blindfolds

[Russell:] Thank you so much.

And did you bring a blindfold with you? If anybody doesn't have one, I've got these that are — just, they've got a little stuff over them. If you need a second blindfold, or anything, you can always use some of these. Just give them back. I tend to travel the world with these.

But we'll need our blindfolds, and then we should just leave them in here. A number of the lessons over this week, we'll be using blindfolds.

And so one of the things about when we're working with blindfolds is we want to be more conscious of what's on the floor, because sometimes we're actually moving with the blindfolds. So let's eliminate extraneous stuff. Certainly don't leave any glasses or cups or stuff around.

And as much as we can, we'll put the chairs against the wall, so we create much more free space. And also to be more organized in terms of some rows for your mats, so we can map out the space without seeing, so it's more knowable.

So let's take a little pause, 10 minutes, and we'll continue. Let's say 10 after 11, I'd like to continue. Bring in the blindfolds. Don't put them on yet, but get them.