Practice

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 1, Session 1 — 68 minutes

Summary: Russell welcomes the group for a light evening, keeping the night short after long journeys. He dedicates the time to a friend in Istanbul and to people standing up in difficult circumstances, then they sit, sense the earth and the limbs, stand, walk a few steps, and close for the morning.

Welcome

So welcome, welcome, welcome us all.

I've been hearing so much about these long journeys today that many of you have had, so we're not gonna work too late tonight. We're gonna keep it light. I'd like us to get a good night's sleep.

And also, Wendy, Bob, Tom, and Lisa will be joining us, but are not here now.

Oksana and Barbara, who were not here last time, will also not be here. They're not gonna continue in this course. They're gonna look toward another.

Well, I've been thrilled, imagining us all coming together. There's so many steps I feel that many of us are ready for, from hearing from your emails, and how the process and the practice has been unfolding.

And I don't want to speak long tonight. I want to mostly spend some time just getting here. So we'll do a little bit of movement, a little bit of sitting, a little bit of walking.

Dedication

I do want to take a moment. Those of you who follow the board know the Embodied Life friend, Shirin, who is in Turkey.

Hi, Lisa. Welcome. So nice that you're here. Yeah. That's okay.

So, I've been very much in my heart with Shirin, who, for those who don't know, lives in Turkey, lives in Istanbul, and I have a very long history with her. She came to do a seminar with me when she was about 19 years old, from Turkey. Came — I think the first one was in Germany or something — and her parents, especially her mother, was pretty liberal, and let her do this.

Turkey has a different climate than a lot of the East, and she did a Feldenkrais training in California with me in her early 20s. And then did the Embodied Life program, the first one in Switzerland. And all through the years, she would come to these different unusual places, and there would be sharing. Very slight, very — studied psychology, trying to really do something in the Turkish psyche, especially the women and the way the women have been treated historically.

And she always inspired me very much. Very delicate soul, very permeable soul, and it just thrilled me to watch her develop over the years.

And so when she wrote to the board about the beginnings of the protests in Istanbul, in the square in Istanbul, it was really so personal, her and her friends. Mostly for her it was about the trees. It was the one place where she had these trees that she would sit under almost every day, and it was like she lost her friends, because — I don't know. We don't want to go into too much of the political history. I've kind of followed it for some years, but he's a very autocratic man who's done some very good things for Turkey, especially in the early years, but he's a bit megalomaniac now, I would say — would judge him.

So he said, let's make a mall out of this place, because we need to upgrade, need to become more of a modern country. And so they started cutting down these trees, and it ignited a fervor throughout Turkey, who are really independent-minded people, many. There's also a very strong Islamic fundamentalism, so it's really a split country underneath the surface. And that's really coming to the fore.

I've been quite concerned for her health and safety. And so it's amplifying now, so I was grateful to hear a message again from her.

So, as I did on my weekend seminar, I would like to do here, which is to dedicate our great opportunity in our safety, and in the gifts that we have here — whether we agree politically or don't agree — that there are human beings all over the world standing up in very challenging circumstances.

And that we can have a connection to that that's more than theoretical, even more than kindness, or kind thinking, but actually have a connection because of our embodied entering of our moments.

There's some — I don't know how I want to describe it — something like we're in this radiance, or in this field, together. What is influencing them can influence us. We can influence them, hopefully.

And those of you who have been looking at my writings lately, this sense of interconnectivity has been so deepening for me, in new ways, new transformative ways, that it's been coming to the fore of my own practice, and in my own teaching. We can know our interconnection to all beings as a living experience, not as a theory, and something that touches our hearts so much, opens our hearts, breaks our hearts sometimes.

So, picturing, sharing, sending her blessings. Friends.

And of course, I don't want to say, just because I know someone in Turkey, that's where the concern is. It's much larger than that, but they are an example of humanity. Humanity's longing in certain directions, for freedom, for being heard, for life to be honored in the communities that we're living. These are human longings. Wherever you fall down politically on the spectrum, these are human longings.

And my deep prayer is to be part of a world that our children's children's children's children's children — you know, we have to think in the long term — might live in a world where that's the norm, considering that sense of non-separation is the norm.

Sitting

Like to just sit together for a little bit, and then we'll do some movements a little bit. We'll do a lot of little bits tonight.

Lisa, is there a cushion?

[Silence 18 minutes]

On the floor

Find your way onto your back. Not gonna do a lot of movement, so you may not need to set up your mat unless it just makes you more comfortable. And come find a way onto your back.

Can you come down a little bit? You're on the floor there. Okay, so hey, move the chairs, please.

And just begin by sensing the reality of the earth and your body meeting.

How to be with the simple profundity of this relationship, this carrying, this mutual attraction.

And just slightly let your head roll a bit, so you can feel whatever comes with that.

And I wonder if there's any responsiveness in your legs to the turning of your head. Can be very, very subtle. It could be not at all. But just wonder, how far down yourself is there some kind of resonance with this turning?

And then let that pause.

I wonder if either leg is easier to sense, lying here, if it somehow emerges from the background more easily or prominently.

And bend one leg to standing. And just notice the leg that called your attention to come to standing. Feel its presence, where the foot and the floor know each other.

And somehow the knee and the foot have some kind of relationship. Without so much trying to figure that out, can we just sense into it? The foot is shaped like this, and I can sense my lower leg and knee, and they have been relating to each other for a long time.

And then extend the attention to include the hip on that side, knowing that this hip and this knee and this foot have been functioning together, and forming patterns and connections to the rest of the self and to each other.

Maybe it can be interesting just to kind of consider that, and to be with that.

Notice how your attention brings life to the world. Your attention lights up your experience.

And then let that leg get long. Feel it getting long. Feel how it finds its way to its own length, and then how the hip and knee and foot find another way of being together in this long form. So let the leg get long.

And then let your other leg come to bending.

And just, again, listen to this fresh way. Listening to the foot knowing the floor, and somehow the foot and knee have this old friend relationship, and how the knee and the hip, and of course the leg and the rest of the self.

And then let your other leg bend as well.

And maybe it can be interesting to feel how the legs are different, how the feet touch the floor a little differently, and the relationship to each knee has maybe some difference that can be sensed. And just open your interest to those relationships.

And then how the knees towards the hips, the pelvis, probably have some difference. Could be the angle of the feet are a little different, or how they touch the floor. The one side of your pelvis might feel closer to the ceiling. Or it could just simply be that something feels more present and easier to sense, and something more distant.

And then feel how you could use both feet on the floor and somehow lift your pelvis a little bit. Just feel that beginning, that activation of these relationships that we were feeling without activity.

And now, just a curiosity about how the feet and knees and hips relate as you lift the pelvis a little bit off the ground.

Of course, when you lift, you can really enjoy the changing relationship to this earth.

And it's always in the beginning, the simple, that the greatest revelations can occur. You know, one foot used a little bit more than the other. The inside of one knee a little more active than the outside of another knee, in the sense that one foot is pressing more clearly.

Whether you sense differences or not, one can maybe appreciate the profundity of being able to even ask those kinds of questions in your own experience.

[Silence 52 seconds]

Letting go

Maybe we can let — oh, traveling of the day, whether it was today or yesterday or whenever. Inviting the earth to take any of the residuals from this body into that body, kind of letting go into the support.

Imagine that could even be possible. You don't even have to have it as — if it's not an experience or any kind of belief, but just a possibility that this large body of the earth is actually offering to not only support, but to be a refuge, a place of letting go into.

Maybe you don't have to carry so much, separate from this earth, as if it has to live in your body. Maybe it's possible this body is actually an offering, like the way mother carries a baby.

And bend your legs once again. Let your feet come to the ground, and feel that connection through your legs and feet, this earth.

Arms and pelvis

Just let your arms extend towards the ceiling, above your chest. Kind of let the fingers feel, through your arms, through your fingers. Feel that, and just a light reaching with one arm, and then a reaching with the other, and listening to any ways they're a little bit different as you reach with one or reach with the other.

Light reaching.

Maybe the breath can be awake in the background.

Light reaching.

And let the arms rest for a moment. We don't want to get—

Feel across your shoulders, how the arms connect to the rest of your self.

And maybe the right hand has a little bit of a different quality than the left hand. Maybe the way the right arm wants to be is a little bit different than the way the left arm wants to be.

And all this can be maybe of interest, of wonder. And bring both arms up once again, and this time begin to lift your pelvis, feeling your legs as you also feel your arms going towards the floor above your head, the backs of the hands going towards the floor, as if the long arms are being lifted from your pelvis.

The backs of the hands go towards the floor in the space above your head. So the arms go towards the floor. The hands are like they're reaching above your head, but connected to the pelvis lifting.

So now we're wanting to track all these limbs together.

Listening. Listening — but some feeling that the pelvis coming in the air, and the arms going towards the floor, have some relationship.

If you can actually feel both legs, both arms, let the pelvis come in the air, and then the pelvis comes towards the floor as the arms come over the chest once again.

All the way from your feet, pelvis lifting, to the arms coming over.

If you feel unsatisfied, or that's enough, you lower down and just pause and sense yourself. If you'd like to move a little more, that's fine.

Rolling

Lower the arm. Pause for a moment.

Bend your right leg, and bring your right arm towards the ceiling, forward towards the ceiling. And pushing off the right foot, roll your pelvis and reach towards the ceiling, as if your arm is coming out all the way from your foot and your pelvis.

Let your head roll to the left, and let the senses — if you can sense all the way through your fingertips — letting that whole right shoulder come away from the floor. And you feel that rolling, but it's mostly the sense of connection all the way from that right foot through to that right hand.

The head rolls left as you reach up and roll your pelvis left.

Nice. Even feel your eyes going left. Your whole spine, find that rotation.

When you feel like that's enough, you pause. If some more movements feel interesting, you do a few more.

Let's all lower down for now, and just sense the miracle that we can move with such listening, and then we can notice what happens throughout our whole body. Consciousness is alive. It's clearly quite a miracle. A confounding miracle, to be alive and experiencing in such ways.

[Silence 38 seconds]

And just while we're pausing here, live a moment from today where something touched you. Something. Could be a very little thing that comes to mind. It doesn't have to be a big thing that happened today, and it can be, but a moment where something — somebody held the door, or they looked you in the eye, or you saw something, you tasted something, connected in some way.

Let your body have that moment, just by bringing it forward in a sensory-rich way. Even if you didn't notice it at the time, notice how it was received in there.

And then just sense yourself. You're here. Hear sounds, as well as sensations in your body, the space around you.

Please bend your left leg, and bring your left arm towards the ceiling. And just enjoy discovering how, from your pelvis turning, there can be this invitation towards length, and then your arm can reach, and your head can roll. Just that whole remarkable interconnectivity throughout your whole body.

So the left leg bends. Left arm bent — I'm sorry, left arm long. Reaching towards the ceiling. Doing the left leg, the head rolls.

Feel the way the pressure goes into the floor through that left foot, and how the knee then responds, and that hip, and they all somehow work together in that turning.

Somehow that whole left side energy is to come away from the floor and extend toward the ceiling. Really let the left side of the pelvis come away from the floor.

And then maybe a few times, a little bit quicker, just lighter, more playfully, just to feel. But can reach—

And then pause. Rest.

And just let both arms rest upward on the floor, some comfortable place. Don't make it a strain on your shoulders, but upward, so that they're not towards the ceiling, but headward, up on the floor somewhere. Bend your legs. Both feet on the floor. Just a few times, light, a little quicker, lighter, more playful. Lift your whole pelvis in the air, feeling through your fingertips.

When the pelvis is high, let the fingers kind of pop out, almost like you're taking a breath that goes through your fingertips. The fingers pop out a little bit, as if from your feet through your fingers. It's lengthening through the whole spine.

Okay, let's leave that.

And then, just the last sense, for right now, of being on the floor.

Standing

Roll to your side. Come on up to standing.

Yeah, just take a moment. Connect to the ground. Brush your feet.

A little bit of give in your knees. Knees are not locked.

Feeling both feet, how each leg's a little bit different, perhaps, than the other.

It's alive in your arms and hands, legs and feet.

Feel yourself on this spot.

As if growing out of the ground, let your arms lift. Feel — there can be some kind of sense of each leg, your feet, even as you're reaching up. And come down.

Let the feet be a little bit wider than your pelvis.

Moving onto your right leg, letting the right arm lift, the left heel lift. And then looking up and beyond, feeling that whole connection through that whole side, into the earth and above.

Lowering down.

In a sense of connecting beyond the body, can you even connect back in time, today, to somebody who gave you a little moment of a gift? It could have been a smile that, when you reflect now, somehow comes to you as touching to your heart. Beyond your body were all these meetings, and maybe there's one that can come to you.

Gift of the human moment.

Come to your left. Left arm lifts, right heel lifts. Think all the way through the foot into the earth, through the arm, so you are connected above, below. You're sensing yourself right here, sensing the ambience.

One more time, both arms up, and look up. Let there be a little give in your knees, your hips, your ankles, so you feel the ground, and you're up.

A little softness in the jaw.

[Silence 36 seconds]

And sensing all around. Listening, surfacing the around. So you're in yourself, and you're in the space.

Walking

What's standing depends on you, yourself, and around yourself. Feel free — your whole body.

Eyes closed. Take three steps forward. Three quicker steps with each footfall.

No pressure.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Closing

So, I wish you a good night's sleep.

I'll be here for 7. Well, start at 7 in the morning. Great to get here a little early. You're always welcome if you oversleep.

Does anybody need a knock on their door, that doesn't have a way to wake up? Are they missing their alarm clock?

Tell Catherine that the phone's gonna ring at 6 in the morning. Not a good idea?

Okay, I'll stay here for a few minutes. Yes, for allergies. Yes.

Can somebody — I don't think that heat will be a problem in the morning — but when we can plug in the hot water pot in the morning.