Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 6, Session 3 — 33 minutes

Summary: Russell invites the group to sense what is still living from the week's practices and to share questions. They speak about the larger space, the inner life's intelligence, tenderness, and attention. He then tells them he may offer another program, and asks them to move downstairs for the movement lesson.

Reflecting back

[Russell:] We can sense how working with the conversation about recordings, and materials, and ease of material, brings up a kind of anxiousness about learning for some. And let's just feel into your bottom.

And the sounds come.

And acknowledge anything that's living in you that arises from that, if it's still there.

And then just take a few moments to reflect back, and just go kind of in order back through the movement practices outside. Any confusions, questions, unclarities, or anything that comes about those. Or reflect back into that — how that lives for you, or doesn't.

And back to our meditation, this picture from this morning and also from last night, of the interconnectivity, the interbeing. That's been such a key theme for part of our work this week.

And just notice, also going back to your threesome yesterday, to the threesome or foursome, where now each of us have had a chance to be the number one. And we had another instance of interconnecting around something, working with it. And there's so many different levels to learn from. How you process, how you witness another, how we inter-affect.

So let's take a few minutes with anything from all of that that might like to come forward, as a question, as a sharing, so that what's living in us from our practices together can be fertilized.

The larger space

[Participant 1:] I have a question about the larger space that we are going into, and the relationship between that larger space and the other things that are in there.

Because when I'm in the larger space, I'm having a conversation in my head. Language is going through my head about this is there, and this is there, and this is there. But also, I sometimes find that I think I'm in the larger space, but there's that voice, you know, like the language pulls me into some story, right?

And so, is the larger space quiet? Is there quietness there? Because if I'm doing this — yeah.

[Russell:] So, great question. Let's see if this is a confusing answer or not.

In its essence, the larger space is stillness itself. It's vast. It's like the space of this room has only an open quality for whatever is going to appear in it.

Now, what's true is that any time this room is known, there's something appearing in it. When something is appearing in it, the space has something in it. So you can be in touch with this larger space and have words going on, language going on, birds going on, head nodding going on, looking for words going on.

The question is, have I identified the I with any of those phenomena? Have I, as this boom of infinite potential, locked into a limited dimension?

Now, I'm still in the larger — you're always in a larger space, but you've gone unconscious to the larger space. So we don't get to have, in a conscious way, the benefit, we could say, of the larger space.

Now, the larger space is closer than your skin. You can never be out of it, but you can be completely unconscious to it.

So the larger space was here before you were born, and will be here after you go.

He speaks a short poem: he is not the I he takes himself to be, but the one standing beside him, unseen — sometimes visited, sometimes forgotten — calm when he speaks, forgiving, walking where he cannot, and still standing when he dies.

[Russell:] So the I has all that. The I has all that, and what arises in any moment is within the I.

The problem is we identify with small sections of this vast open space, and it feels too small. It feels stuck. It's like, this is the place that just wants to watch TV all the time and just go to sleep and not be — this is the place that — and we get sucked into these places, and that co-opts the name I.

And that's why we have this second gesture. This is you remembering who you are.

And when you are the spacious presence that you learn in a Focusing process — my objection to Focusing is that it's brought on as kind of a temporary — I say that's much closer to who you are.

And we want to learn to live in that while we're taking care of the horizons. The horizons are the birds and the hand moving and the pain in the neck and the fear that I don't understand what he's saying and the excitement that I do understand, and all of that is happening within this vast space.

So the essential qualities of our being are spacious and light-filled. Light has two qualities. It's warm, so we are essentially loving beings, and there's clarity. We can see what's there.

And then out of space and the capacity for noticing, a moment arises. So there's infinite potential. Something new is going to happen every single moment, and we don't know what it's going to be. Right? So, I'll get there in a minute.

So what we want to see is, we can say that yes, the larger space in its essence is still, but what arises in it can have anything.

And when we remember, when we can be with what arises, when we can give it some space — every single time someone is locked into something, and they step back and see it, they have an experience: I feel more spacious.

I've been through this, you know, a hundred thousand times, if I add my own experience and those I've been with — you know, probably more than that — and I've never had somebody go, oh God, I'm in this really sad — oh, I'm seeing that sad space, I feel more locked in. I've never once had that.

Because when you return to that capacity, you are returning to your essence. You're returning to the spaciousness of being. Right? Does that make sense?

Oh, good.

[Participant 1:] Yeah. Right. Yes.

[Participant 2:] And to be soft, artful, and loving.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 2:] But not even those words — they just change the quality of it, often.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 2:] So there are different ways to build this thing.

[Russell:] Yes. Right. Beautiful.

And that's such a good observation — to me, an important observation — that it's one of the functions of poetry, one of the functions of beauty, one of the functions of art, one of the functions of movement, to help us remember.

Access

[Participant 3:] I have a question. I'm not sure how to ask it, but what I was going to say, before the earlier question and what you described, was that I felt yesterday in my process that things really shifted because I stayed connected to the larger space.

But now I'm a little confused, because I feel like I have the capacity to witness my feelings in my mind and my body, and that there is this larger space that I'm witnessing it from. So I think what I added yesterday was more a sense of the situation, maybe — I don't really know — but somehow there's something there about the physical context, like the room that I added.

[Russell:] Right. Well, that's different, really, maybe, from what we're observing. No, no, that's access, that's access. Right, we need that. Again, it's confusing when I say.

A doorway to the larger space is to come into your body, come into the ground. Another doorway to the larger space is to be connected to the space around you. But the backspace is very important for that. Right?

Well, you know, if you go through the weeks, we've touched all these movements, right? And they're there for this kind of function, that we have access, because it's really challenging not to be identified with our history. So we need a lot of access places, a lot of ways of remembering.

That's why we have the poetry, that's why we have the ground, that's why we have the space around the body, why we have the breath, why we have all these things —

[Participant 3:] And I guess the only other thing I wanted to say about the process was, it's amazing to me, the intelligence of the inner life.

Because I was number one, and I got to go twice, and the first time my inner life brought up images that I really didn't fully understand. And then she went, and I came back, and really — as opposed to talking about the inner life — it said, okay, let me give you another shot at things. Brought up images that were really different, but speaking for exactly the same. So that was just —

The inner life

[Russell:] Well, you know, it was and is startling to me that it's not hiding. But it moved — a certain kind of attending, intending, tending to.

And, you know, like Jean would say, how dare you? You've been living in all these situations for your whole life. It knows about that already. Why don't we ask it? That's what it would say. Why don't we ask it?

Why do we try to figure it out with the part of us that knows so little about it? And yet we keep trying to do that. And we feel safe when we're doing it.

So, you know, but if we're willing to take that extra — it's not asking for you to, okay, you've got to devote the next year to this, or the next day to this, or the next hour to this. Yeah, just — and as you do it more frequently, this is where the psychoanalytic viewpoint, in certain ways, I think, is not helpful, or distorts something.

When we were raised with this picture — which is not always wrong, not throwing it out — but it's not a helpful picture to think of as the truth, that the unconscious is down there and doesn't want to be seen. And if you see it, it's kind of this lurking something that we have to repress to protect the ego. And that whole picture is not so helpful. Right? Is not so helpful.

Because my experience — and Maurice Zuccaroshi said it is, nothing is hidden. And what he meant was, you know, if you're willing to drop down, life wants to function and it wants to open. It needs the kind of invitations we're learning.

But again, you know, it's likely every one of us will fall into not wanting to go in there, and try and figure it out up here, and then we'll hopefully have enough various ways of going in that we will — okay, okay, I'll give it a few minutes.

Yeah, and the inner life does that. It does know everything, because it has been there. It also knows that there's really a huge trouble that has happened, which it has formed itself. Yeah. And it knows that, and smolders. And that's in there too. Yeah, sure.

And it knows it can't reveal it all at one time, but can almost always bring a next step. Almost always bring a next step. Whether that step is small or big, it depends on things that I couldn't even guess at. It's so many things it depends on.

Right. And with the attitude we develop in the movement practices, with the space that grows, with the attention able to move, we're loosening up the system so that it's easier to go that next step.

Integration

[Participant 4:] I think this fits. I just would like to — I was the number one too. I've been — I seem, a lot, to be a number one person or something. I was thinking, yeah, get out of — I'm very glad I did it.

And my theme, after my talk with you, is integration. And then, of course, we have that nice sharing that you did, and I was to lecture, and I'm like, oh, I don't need to do that. Right away the head said, I've got what I need, and then I thought, that's probably not the right answer.

So I chose to go inside to discover what would integration mean within there. And I'm just going to give you a couple of synopses of some of it, because I don't think I'm alone in how I perceive the world. I think it's — but there's no rush to do integration. You don't do it.

And I think there's that organizing sense that I'm going to take an action. So it was much more receptive.

My body is just asking me to check in, just check in, and guidance will appear. I mean, you know, even if it's just a warm-heartedness — you know, here we are — that might be just enough. And it's just about caring, not overreaching.

So the checking in, the mantra I got was, it's not what can you give me. It's I'm here for you. The message is, I'm here for you. And it's an offering. And I'm supposed to receive it.

And if I get words about a situation, I'm not supposed to give that to anybody. It's really for me. To be able to be with a situation that might pertain to somebody else, but it's for me to live there. To sit with that.

And this tenderness — I just kept thinking my inner self was smiling. Like, you're with this process right now. And anyway, it was — so there was just a different — yeah, they're just a process. Yeah. I just — so anyway.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's key. It's key, this tenderness. This letting it know you're there, and you're welcoming, and you're there for it to give whatever it needs.

And that not overreaching is kind of — to that point — it's like our mind can say, okay, I want to, you know, I kind of want to finish this thing and be on the other side of it today. But the inner life feels so pressured when that's a demand on it that it closes down.

So our mental strategies are the exact thing that closes our inner knowing.

And when we see that, we can get some confidence in, with a little bit of a smile, calling to task the habit of trying to figure — oh, there we are again. Oh, okay. We know you don't work when you're functioning by yourself. Okay. Let's see what's in there. Oh, but I really want to try to figure. Oh, no — yeah, okay.

Once we get into some comical relationship to the voices that want to control everything, we get some confidence that the disconnected thinking is not going to solve anything. And in fact is exactly what pushes this thing into hiding, and into closing itself off, and building a shell around it.

And so every time we cultivate this tenderness, it says, oh, maybe it's safe here. Maybe it's safe. And so it becomes so much quicker, easier, more available, because it's not wanting to hide. It's wanting us to be whole. It wants to join the party. It doesn't want to stay closed off, even the trauma places.

They're so lonely in that corner, under the bed, with its blanket over its head, you know?

And so that's why the unconditional warmth is where we started, where we continue, where we go. You know, it's good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end.

Attention

[Participant 5:] Yeah. I just wanted to add that — and I already emailed you — but to bring into this space how beautiful it was.

I was actually partnering with someone, and your suggestion to take in the space from me and around her. And I realized what I was doing, in my anxiety to hear the words, was I could hardly see anything more than this, when I was listening. And, you know, I'm practically sitting on people to hear them. And it was so lovely, just to give that space. And just the whole triad experience was so much.

[Russell:] Yeah. Really great.

And the inner life likes the same thing. It doesn't like to be explored like this.

You know, there can be moments of pointed, focused attention, but it goes like — think of listening to a symphony. If you listen, there are moments where it's great to focus on that viola, and it's great to focus on that flute, but much of the time you're going to be in this open attention, letting it wash through you to really hear it. And then narrow it for a little bit, because to change your field is helpful.

It's the same as we're paying attention to someone. If I start getting bored or disconnected in a moment, I know my attention has gotten frozen. It's not the content that's boring me. It's my way of attending to the moment.

So someone could talk to me about anything, and I could find something. I can listen to them. I can also look at the color of their shirt. I can also see what's the background. If I was a photographer, while I'm listening, can I take this picture?

And Andy Warhol taught us that a soup can can be interesting, right? And if you can find a soup can interesting, you can find any moment. There's something — there are verbs, there are colors, you know?

So we can be responsible for our attention and still be with the person. It's interesting.

Through time

[Russell:] Okay. I think — oh, yeah, go ahead.

[Participant 6:] Oh, I was just going to share that I had a really touching experience in our sit last night, after we were speaking about connecting through time, and sitting for future generations.

And it was connected with the trio I was in, where our younger selves seemed to also — we had this space-time interaction. And then I was struck, sitting there, feeling that beings in the past have done this for me, sitting there, just like Indra's net — not just in flow, but like, okay — and that was so touching.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, yes. We'll actually investigate that starting later this morning.

Right now, we need to go into some movement, but I want to invite something.

Another program

[Russell:] I've been questioning everything about the Embodied Life School, and what's coming, and where to put my energies, because I've got a lot of really interesting invitations in the world.

And so it was about, oh, probably six or eight months ago, when it was the time to start organizing the next program that would kind of replace the program. And that's normally about six months before the end. We start getting the vendors, getting out advertising. And so that was — well, you know, we don't have anything on the calendar. Are you planning? I go, don't worry, I'm working on it. You know, I'm listening, I'm listening. I don't know.

So then it'd be the next month. Say, well, you know, there's nothing on the calendar. I'm listening.

So it's been a real question, how to bring enough support to graduates who are teaching. You know, the once-a-year graduate group helps, but it's not specifically a teacher's group, because there are many people not teaching, and it's for all of them. Some of it helps the teachers, but that's not its function.

And there's been a good group of teachers meeting without me, which I really love and support. But see, what would be a good use of my time and their time — and looking, so thinking, how do I, you know, do I want to create some kind of program for graduates who are teaching?

And so I haven't come to a lot of conclusions, but all of that's been in the air. Well, maybe I don't start a new program, but just go deeper with the people who've already done it. But I listen to the world and I listen to myself, and that's my process.

So just very recently, like in the last few days, I've gotten pretty clear — although my next step is with Linda, sitting down, because we make decisions together — I think I'm going to do another program, in California.

And one of the possibilities is to do it at Anabuti. Another possibility is to do it at Angela. I've got to check dates at Santa Sabina. Got to see it.

So let me start. If this ends up being the decision, I need to start doing the groundwork, the practical work.

One of the challenges for me, if I decided to do it here, is this room maxes out at twenty-three people. We've all found that. The group really works best for me if it starts at around twenty-eight or thirty, because we'll end up somewhere between twenty and twenty-four, is what usually happens. So this would not be okay.

But they have another room downstairs in the big building, which a lot of groups use, and a lot of teachers love. It's kind of a basement room. It's much less light. I didn't love it when I went. It also has pillars, and I have a thing about pillars.

But I've gone in there a number of times. I go, oh, this is pretty nice, this could be — and Linda was in there once. She said, I could decorate this this way. I can make this into a great one.

So what I want to do is do our movement lesson over there. So we're going to move. There will be chairs that we need to move out of the way, so we need to do a little housework there. But take your mats over and — let's say, how much time do you need? Is twenty after okay, or quarter after?

Okay. If you walk around the right side of the building, just come around and you'll see — there's a little ramp down there, and there's a door that opens.

[Participant:] Excuse me?

[Russell:] You're under the dining, correct. There are windows. It's going to be a little dank at first, because the windows have not been opened.

[Participant:] Sorry, what's the word?