Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 7, Day 6, Session 1 — 56 minutes

Summary: A closing circle on the divine feminine, courage, and obedience to something larger. Participants speak of finding a voice, strength with softness, and the tenderness of a child in the group. Russell thanks those who gathered the week, names people who could not come, and the session ends with a reading on saying hello to what is in the body.

The divine feminine

[Participant:] Yeah, and then, yes.

[Russell:] Correct?

[Participant:] Yeah. I'm interviewing him to Mosul. And she told us the protocol when the Sufi issued water. And I thought it was going to be about, oh, trials in Lotus sleep, music at night.

Christina, can you hear? You need it louder.

She began speaking of how we sleep like death, and fell asleep while forgetting. And I thought that on my own I got into something much deeper. And then we went around and said names and said why we were there. And again, unbeknownst to me, came this voice: to seek and to find the divine within me.

And that was twenty-five years ago. So I began to study the feminine, and I'm still in.

[Russell:] Thank you so much for doing that, Linda.

[Participant:] I feel as though I've gone home again.

I feel as though I'm at home, but I've been in, you know, Hinduism and Greek Orthodox and Hebrew school and Catholicism, and then those, and then I found, and it felt like — comparative religions, to the reason that they did.

[Russell:] Well, now you know the difference.

[Participant:] Well, love them all.

[Russell:] The universality, and particular relevance to this time, of the divine feminine.

When we've been talking about systems of domination, or the negative masculine, or the oppressive systems — it's not to be confused with, oh, women are better than men, or something. There are certain qualities in consciousness that are ripe for cultivation, for the balancing of consciousness in the realm, in the mind space that we share.

And there's something about what's carried in the nurturing spirit of the divine feminine that is so right for this time. That doesn't mean you forget about the importance of the positive masculine, and growing the qualities that are living there.

When you see the change in Western Dharma, when you see the movement from very patriarchal systems in Japan, and even in Tibet, and the way it's moving into the Western world, there's this recognition that we need to include relationship. And it's not the old relationship of up and down that was right in a former age.

It's a different quality of consciousness, and respecting differences, but having this sense of — through dialogue, through interaction, through respecting each voice, through love as the path.

I so appreciate how Linda's brought that particular side, through the Sophianic teachings that she brought into our family, that was just right for what was happening in the practices that I was doing. And the way the work with focusing is like that. It's honoring the same energy, when it's done in the spirit we're talking about.

The kinds of communication. Feldenkrais movement has that in it. That sense of deep listening, relationship to the whole, nothing left out. These are all fitting. Same string.

[Participant:] I feel particularly blessed and lucky to have had this gathering here, and to have this chance to really spend time in that space at Libra, and how they've come together. It's always been a little part of our gatherings for people, but to really feel the marriage — wonderful, beautiful, yeah.

Courage and obedience

[Participant:] Unanimity, virtue, courage. What I didn't say earlier, but unanimity is the — of course, it was the monks at that time, but the monks fiercely strived to understand it, and their vows were obedience, chastity, and the knights took the vow of courage and loyalty and action, as they, you know, the last ones up.

The knights had to learn from the monks. They couldn't have courage without obedience, otherwise it would be aggression. So the vertical had to learn from the horizontal, the spirit from the soul, or the masculine from the feminine, so that it would be whole, like you say. There's no courage without the heart, without the inclusivity.

[Russell:] Yeah. And I think it's so important, because we hear obedience today and we feel like it's under someone's thumb. But obedience in this sense means to something larger than my individual historic self. It means that we find what is that largeness. Unless I'm in service to something larger that feels right — that obedience to that.

Otherwise we just cower in our fears, and in our seeking of more pleasure, temporary pleasure. It's hard to — unless we have something else calling us, something larger calling us, the magnetism of our fear, and just seeking relief in this moment through some kind of whatever, will dominate. And so.

[Participant:] Yeah. Right.

Do you think that's cowardice, or the opposite?

[Russell:] Please.

Anything that would like to come forward. Anything that wants to be — that would help you feel complete in this time. This would be a good time. And we can also just sit together.

Finding a voice

[Participant:] Yeah. Well, I've been — really, the theme of courage has been really prominent in my mind the last year, and especially after the last three years I've been visiting with my husband's group of students. Berlin. And there is such an interesting change going on, with recognizing the past there, and it's becoming more public, and definitely in museums, and more discussed.

And I travel with an ethics professor, and some of my own experiences, and seeing just what's been happening in Europe over the last few years, I've just been thinking about courage. And I'm sure it's an outgrowth of also what we've been doing here.

And I've been advocating for them to teach, rather than leadership, in the business school, because I feel like leaders are few and far between. If they would start teaching courage, then there would be a true change, because people could feel the courage to speak up when they're in a business and somebody starts making loans to people that can't afford them, and mortgages and so on, and how that could help there.

But then in the larger context of society, and how we treat each other. And it just has been a thought for me, about how we can start to maybe not be so concerned about who's the leader, and that we are giving ourselves and our children and our friends and our enemies, or whatever they can be called, in each of our own languages or voices — but that there's a platform for that.

Courage has a wholly different place in our society. And so I commend you for doing what you're doing. I'm going to try and get some people interested on my side, but I just think that we need to start thinking of it differently.

[Russell:] Yeah, that's really, really moving for me. And that we get that connection — to really have courage, which means to have your voice, to have your voice in moments where things are going on that don't seem right. To have your voice, to feel like you can speak, that you have something to say, and that you can say it.

To me, that's where our embodiment — you know, we need to feel secure enough that we are here, we have place. We have enough presence that I can honor this voice, and this perception, this perceiver in here.

So what I'm so grateful for in this step is, just in our embodied life work over the weeks, we go from ground, and the sense of your body, the length and the centering, to then we begin connecting to space around, and more connecting to others, more in beginnings of communication, and perceiving out and in, turning the light around, being able to perceive in different directions.

The next steps are, how do we manifest this love in the world, as well as growing our individual practices? And that's a beautiful example of how to help people find their capacity to speak up.

[Participant:] I think it has to come from the other, to see it as a — to see when one has it within themselves, to speak up.

I'm thinking of Grant, my Feldenkrais client for a hundred years, and he sat like this every time he'd come and sit on the table. And we'd do work, and he'd end up sitting like this. So he'd come

and sit like this. I bought him a belt for his pants, so that helped. And we did a lot of things for a long period of time.

And then he found a relationship. And he wanted to hug someone. Because he had to hug someone, he started sitting up.

When it was my first time teaching, I was a trainer, an assistant trainer, I was gonna die. I was gonna just die. I was so frightened. And then I learned, what do they need? Who are they? What do they need?

And so to me, it's that. It's again masculine and feminine. We have to find our own voice and come forward. But it's in service to these people here. What do they need? Then I basically have a voice for them, because they have a name and I can answer that name. Then they need something, so then you can be there. But you think you have to come up with everything yourself. It starts — it starts to go to college.

[Participant:] I wanted to say something.

Through the course of the lessons of this week, the growing back up. And there's an area in my spine that has felt kind of like a weak link in the past, and the complement, or balance, of it is this softening through the chest, so that it feels almost like there's kind of a valley that's readily available to any given moment. But that can value the strength, really.

[Russell:] Yeah. Strength and softness. That's beautiful. I really see that in you, and I really get it from you.

[Participant:] Yeah.

And then I guess if I take a question onto that — I know that the lessons move us, and I know moving us creates different accessibility, emotionally, or how we know ourselves. I'm just so pregnant, it wants to go back, and — oh, we got the other weeks. Oh, I missed, somehow.

[Russell:] You missed something. Say more.

[Participant:] I can't — I don't know. There's just, it's like, oh, this, to be here today for this service would be so gnarly.

[Russell:] Yeah, it feels secure enough to have that, yeah.

[Participant:] And with people that I don't know necessarily. So with the other weeks, it makes me wonder, what did I miss?

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. It's an unfolding. It's this onion unfolding. And, you know, I'm not saying this is right for everybody, but that's when people do the program again and they get it at another level.

But it is an unfolding of availability. We can be where we are, and we get as much as we can get, and then we get the next layer.

And there's a kind of organicness, and we were so blessed in the way we self-selected. I mean, it would have been fine if some of the people who had intended to be here were also here. I miss them, and it's great. But there was something very precious about the twelve who were here.

And yeah, I'm so grateful to Linda. I'm so grateful that Linda joined the Embodied Life School, and is bringing all her wisdom and best, and learning these particular forms also, and that we could be here.

And, you know, for me it's so touching, because it's a coming together of my whole life. In my life, you know, as the vision of life, the life with Linda. Most of the time, after many years of teaching together, most of the time of late I'll go off and teach on my own. She's doing her own things. And so to be able to be together on the home court, with people who are already developed at the levels that we are in the basic teachings here, allows — like Linda wasn't kidding when she said we have brought something to this place, as well as receiving so much.

I'm sure that there are moments, with the service this morning, with the celebration last night, where it's a very different language, it's very odd in certain ways, very obscure. But yet you were, as near as I could tell, everyone was open to receiving what you were ready to receive. Nobody was saying, oh, this is too weird for me to hang out for, or something. There was a presence for everybody.

And that's generosity also. A generosity of receiving what's being offered. It's not taken for granted. You know, it's not taken for granted at all.

[Silence 36 seconds]

[Russell:] And it's so wonderful that a week before we started — in fact, Linda's in somewhat of a panic. The caterer has canceled. We have another caterer who said, I'm gonna have to cook all the meals. No, there will be someone else. Something will come.

And I said, well, you know, let's just check with Slice of Life. So Linda called Slice of Life, and they were interested, and they went over there, and I spoke to the person who's been a chef there for a while, who said, oh yeah, Richard sold the building — sold the — I think six months ago, and this young couple's here.

And it all just happened. And then Linda sat and designed all these menus with them, and it's like each, you know, when you don't know.

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah. Right, right.

[Russell:] And then, yeah, I just feel like, for most people here, I think it was just such wonderful, supportive food. And also so grateful for the kind of extra touches you brought to the food, that doesn't go unnoticed. And I want to say thank you so much.

For Peter Lowell's gift certificate, we so look forward to that, in your card. We were squealing last night. In the room.

This house

[Participant:] Really, it's — maybe. But I would like to think, and the rest of us spoke about this, just your homing together. In the kitchen, in the main hall, in the foyer, on the labyrinth, on the land. You know, this is our home, and we're private people. We spend — no.

You know, it's a big deal for me to have people watching Bible every Thursday morning.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Your harmony is such a joy. I feel so close to so many people. It's just family. It's really good. And especially every morning, seeing your light come on. Oh, she's in. And then Bruno comes in, and seeing them being alive. Oh, Bruno's here, honey. So it's just very much of a family feeling. Valerie's always been crying about them. So, and I developed that about my group, in — but it was so interesting last night.

[Participant:] I was thinking, I had dinner with Letty, and I love that conversation.

[Participant:] Oh, that reminds me of this.

[Participant:] Right, that's right. Agnes in France. Agnes, yeah. Sabine.

And there's something so beautiful of the work that you all do. You're in silence a lot of the time, and you get to meet the essential in each person. And when they're speaking each different language, you really get to feel the essential. It's so all through your being. And that's just really good. It's really going on for me.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] In the German program, at Johanneshof, at the Zen Center, we have work practice, and it creates something different.

[Participant:] It does.

[Russell:] They're here. I don't know if you need to see the caterers, but I can hear them dropping stuff off.

[Participant:] Okay, well, they might be willing. I can drop it off later.

[Russell:] Yeah.

What is difficult to say

[Russell:] I want anybody who has anything that's difficult. It's hard to enter a space where everything feels so wonderful. There's something, where you're leaving, and there's something that wants to be said, but it doesn't have the same sweet feeling or something. So please, everything is welcome.

[Participant:] And part of me is so embarrassed about feeling this.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] But there's this little part of me that wants to acknowledge you for having been the initiating force for this gathering.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And that I remember when I just didn't feel right about — I just needed, I felt this real strong wanting to come together one more time. And I knew it wasn't enough to say to you, can we get together one more time?

[Russell:] Right. That's true. That would have been true.

[Participant:] I knew it wouldn't happen, and I wanted it to happen. So that wanting it to happen knew that I had to, you know, get a list of people who would say, yes, I want to do this. And I made sure that there was a commitment to it. And then came to you and said, this list of people are committed. But it took some work to gather.

[Russell:] Oh, thank you. Thank you so much for saying something. I'm so happy. Really, thank you for saying something. Yeah. That's beautiful. That's beautiful. And it's true.

I mean, almost every group says, can we have another week? And almost every time I say, let's see.

And then — really, thank you for having the courage to speak the difficult. I invited, if anybody had anything — it's sometimes hard to enter when everything's so sweet and light. Something that's difficult. Barbara just courageously — it was Barbara's vision, intention, and then not only said to me it'd be nice to have another week with the group, but got people to sign up. It was her efforts and initiative.

And it's a beautiful example of intentionality, you know, because we are all here. I mean, somebody gets a thought, and all of a sudden you're buying plane tickets. You know?

And then all the beings who — you know, think of Karen Wallace, who, it was so challenging, because she had to be in court with one of her kids, and she just at first was just devastated that she couldn't come, because she feels such a need to be with us.

And, you know, I'm surprised Robert didn't make it over, but I'm sure it's his efforts right now, up leading. And Tom in Chicago wrote about his — yeah, but he also couldn't, for a bunch of reasons. He's working for the Embodied Life School now, helping us with Facebook and with some other things. He's really — there are a bunch of reasons he couldn't come. And the way he wrote it, it makes him so happy and sad to think of us together. That was his line.

And then Peter Boffey, who just wished us very well, and as much joy as we could. He has — his grandson was a preemie of twelve weeks, and was up and just home. No, not twelve weeks gestational age. No, no, no, it was twelve weeks early. And yeah, oh, I'm sorry, I didn't say that very well.

And Lisa was here for the graduate retreat, and was hosting me in North Carolina, and didn't feel she could do both the graduate retreat and this, with her family.

And — oh, Linda's parent, grandparenting, and she's got her grandchild who's got a lot of needs, and had to stay home. She's getting evaluated at Stanford, and she's taking care of a grandchild, and she also was very much just wanting to be with us.

And Ruth is — right, right, and she sent me three emails this week, you know, just to be part of us. And she's really dedicating herself to embodied life work as an animal communicator. She's studying in South Africa, white lions, with Native Americans here, Europe.

[Participant:] Right.

[Russell:] It wasn't — it turned out to be other communicators. She's going deep in communication and applying, she says, embodied life teachings into that world. And she's coming to the France course for week five. She had missed week five, so you'll be with her there. It's just amazing.

[Participant:] Right, right.

[Russell:] Barb Scott, who I was with last week, was in Alaska. Her oldest and dearest friend was all alone and beginning cancer treatment the day we started here, so she flew Sunday from Bend, from the workshop, to Alaska.

And Wendy and Bob were at the workshop in Bend, and looked so well. And you know how Bob was always, well, yeah, there's a little bit happening, there's a — yeah, I guess there's a little bit happening. And he looks, and he says, you know, and he told me this experience, which I don't want to repeat, with his kids, and it was a transformational experience. And he said, it was just — he was saying, you know, it's really about being present. Like he's giving you this great discovery. And really listen.

You know, and but he looked so well, as did Wendy. So they're so touched.

Anything want to be said, to feel complete?

[Participant:] Yes, Russell. I mentioned to you that I read, in Ann Weiser Cornell, *The Power of Focusing*.

[Russell:] Right, right.

[Participant:] If I may, I would like to read that out, because I want to do it justice.

[Russell:] Sure, sure. Yeah, go ahead.

[Participant:] And, oh, maybe six months ago, they're doing great in Hawaii.

[Participant:] Yes, they're doing well, in Maui. Napoau, upcountry. He's playing ukulele, and she's writing, and she's doing better. Still issues, but doing better, feels stronger.

[Russell:] Good report. It was a good move for them.

A child in the house

[Participant:] I forgot to ask you one thing, like in the difficult circle.

[Russell:] Yeah, go ahead.

[Participant:] I just want to acknowledge Mason's experience here this week. And it was interesting, because I thought the conditions would, like, it would be the easiest week, and it turned out to be the most challenging week of many of the weeks we've had.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] There was something in the — he got really bummed, and was hurt with the not being invited up with the other children.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] And it seems, it was also in reading that Steiner kind of prayer at the end, to just trust that whatever is happening is the learning that's needed. But there's something — I just want to include the tenderness of what his learning was about this week.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you. Thank you. I could, of course, see that he was struggling much more here than elsewhere. And of course that's hard for parents.

[Participant:] I just want to say how special it was to have Mason as part of this group, and watch him grow, and his relationship with him is so special. And just, you know, thank you for allowing Mason to be in the house. I thank you for bringing him, and going to the extra effort that you have to, to get him here. But yeah, just feel like he's a part of it.

[Russell:] Yeah, thank you. It's true. It's true.

[Participant:] I would like to say something also about myself, because for me, having this child presence has been really beautiful. And being in an adult community that isn't always trying to push that child presence away and make it into an adult presence. And it's quiet, and having him crawling around the floor, being a child, and just seeing the joy of that.

And I think our adult communities in general are kind of closed to that appreciation of that child life. It's really — children are not adults, and we can't expect them to be, and we have to just — I mean, I just see.

[Participant:] Yeah. Well, it was very refreshing, actually, that he wasn't perfect. I mean, I would have to go back to my friend in San Francisco and go, yeah, there is something wrong with your kids. There is something wrong with you. He thinks there must be.

And, you know, he's got these wonderful, very rare parents that are consciously raising him. And it was really, truly — I'm not joking — it really was refreshing to see that this is what every — I know how supportive you are, and how loving you are, and how he is comfortable in this environment, and yet you still can't make a kid not be a kid.

And so I think you handle things beautifully. I'm sure it was stressful for you, but honestly, coming from not having children, and watching my best friend struggle with it, I think, you know, you do such a beautiful job. It was so wonderful, and I've been so blessed to have him all this time.

[Participant:] I realized I should have warned you about that. I forgot. And the children have been, you know, they wait till they're seven. And younger, usually, they can't do it. It's a pedagogy thing. And I had — I'm sorry, I got too much on my mind to remember. I was just thinking of him dancing and singing in the story.

[Participant:] And yes, I imagine.

[Participant:] I did remember to tell Ali, who was here at fourteen, because I thought I saw her this morning. I haven't seen her in years. And but, you know, you don't have to stand up. Babysit children from seven to thirteen, since they're all pretty small. But yes.

Tell him — I think he isn't seven years old, only a few years old. Something to look forward to.

[Participant:] It was really quite amazing to witness that change in him, because of seeing his fierceness all week, and he was so with the sound, up until that. And also just in terms of my own inner work, which has always got my inner child in there, to sort of see that event happening. Not that it was the event, but it felt like a real seed of whatever is bugging us in our life right now. Something about that acknowledgement felt like — this is a precious exposure, that moment, for his parents to know, for him to know something about it.

At one point he went to him: your wisdom, child, knows the truth. Don't forget. You know, somehow he wasn't included in it.

[Russell:] Right, he felt the —

Actually, every word that's said in that room, in this room, during that time, lands in everyone's ears, at whatever age they are.

[Participant:] You're right. And there's a different threshold across different times. But, you know, often one thinks it's a story for children.

Oh, I like to live in —

[Participant:] Nice, nice. That's right. Nice.

[Russell:] How about — anything you want me to say?

[Participant:] Well, just on the subject of me, I just want to say, in this, you know, being included or excluded, or I can do it — I think part of his struggle with L was the strong confession in the beginning of the week, of not believing him, not listening to him. And he was so disoriented and insulted, and then it's kind of — it's just up, it's been through the roof. And, you know, tender and up again today. I'm like, what do you mean? You think I can't do it, I'm not included.

But it was such a big deal for him — I'm going to cry saying it — to come to meditation. It was so — there was something so just really wonderful, on so many levels, of like, he can do it. It was really amazing.

For me to sit and not have that. At least I just had a really productive night, when I go, and sitting, all of it, all of that happening right there, being able to hold space, and him. And just to watch him sit up and speak, in the quality of presence here, and really, I just felt like this amazing transmission for him.

[Russell:] Yeah, I saw that.

[Participant:] I saw him nearly receive the — yes. He does not have kids, but you guys know I'm a big kid. To see him, I mean, there were moments like he would pause, and he was just zoning in on Russell's voice, and he was so present. Just his head would tilt, and he was just looking at you, and something moved in me. And that whole scene with you was so loving and touching, to be raised in this environment, you guys. Awesome. People were amazing. People, and parents, and to be raised in this environment, to feel them, and sitting and coming here, and really says stuff like, oh, just quit doing that.

He also had that same listening with the courage conversation.

[Participant:] Don't pathologize him or us. It's hard to just say again what Carl said. There's a lot of hardness of it, you know? It's different than being on retreat without parenting.

[Russell:] Right, sure.

[Participant:] I appreciate you having a space.

Saying hello

[Russell:] Well, I'd like to end with three frustrations, and about —

[Participant:] Oh, 93. Thank you, yes.

I read part of the same manuscript, the reading list for the very first segment, and for a while the book was sitting somewhere. Then I lent the book to a friend of mine, and then she gave it back, and I started to read it again just about two weeks before the program started.

And I thought, when I started reading again, wow, I do not remember even reading this, let alone what was in it that would have helped me so much over this past three years. So there is one little pause, one little second here. Then Ann Weiser Cornell says:

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to say hello to what you find in your body. I've seen over and over how people skip over this step and find themselves in trouble.

For example, Catherine had a tightness in her shoulders that she had been feeling for weeks. She wanted to focus on this. The people in the workshop watched as she rolled her neck impatiently and said, I want to ask this what it's all about, but it won't talk to me. I feel stuck.

Then she looked down at the card she had received at the beginning of the workshop and saw the sentence, I am saying hello to what's here. Oh, she said, I haven't said hello to it yet.

Then the other workshop participants saw a remarkable transformation. Catherine's face flushed, her head stopped rolling, and tears sprang to her eyes. I've never said hello to it, she explained. I've called it bad. I've tried to get rid of it. I've shamed it. I've tried to fix it, but I've never actually said hello.

From that moment on, the tightness in her shoulders began to release, and by the end of the session, after it had given its message, Catherine experienced her body quite differently.

And it made a huge difference to one problem that I've been dealing with for so long, and this is the first week that that problem hasn't manifested itself. So I can —

[Russell:] Thank you. Good reminders.

Anything else before we bow and eat?

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Russell:] Let's put out lunch. And some of us who are not putting out lunch, we can carry the zabutons. We'll put them where we should put them, behind the bed, and that. You know where they're going.

[Participant:] I don't know.

[Participant:] For lunch today, it's quinoa.