



## Ways of Knowing -- December 1, 2011

### "Sangha as a way of knowing" -- Part One

Aph: Hey Bruce

Bruce: Hey, Aph!

Aph: Just going to make myself a sandwich brb

Bruce: Before anyone else gets here - - Would you like to say something about the "recommendations" -- at the beginning?

Bruce: ok. take your time.

Aph: Um sure. thanks. In about 5 minutes?

Bruce: Hey, Mick.

Bruce: Good to see you again.

Bruce: kk.

Mickorod Renard: Hi Bruce

Mickorod Renard: how are you?

Bruce: Actually, I'm not feeling well. . . but all things considered, I'm fine.

Mickorod Renard: hi Aph

Bruce: How are you today, Micki?

Bruce: Hey, Pila!

Mickorod Renard: I am ok thanks, not perfect

Mickorod Renard: Hi Pila

Pila Mulligan: greetings

Mickorod Renard: hi San

Bruce: Hey, San!

Aph: Back. Hi all!

Bruce: wb., Aph.

Aph: san has made such a beautiful art work!

Bruce: Let me guess -- salami on rye?

Bruce: (ooo0-ps... not San's artwork. . . (!)

San: :) with dijon

Bruce: kk.

Aph: um no, feta and avocado and tomatoe and lettuce

Bruce: Are you referring to the Dome exhibits?

Aph: yes

Aph: (nothing to do with my lunch

Bruce: Mine has not been built yet.

Aph: I saw it built. Did you change it?

Aph: Did everyone here get my email summarizing the proposals from last meeting?

Calvino Rabeni: Yes, thanks Bruce

Bruce: After our last two session, in which we discussed the future of WoK, Aph put together our recommendations in a . . .

Bruce: yes, Aph. . . I was just about to mention that. . .

Mickorod Renard: yes thanks, and Bruce's mail

Pila Mulligan: hi atari

Bruce: please go ahead, if you will.

Violet: Hi everyone :)

Mickorod Renard: Hi Atar

Bruce: Hey, Violet!

Aph: so, any concerns, changes, amaaaaaendments?

Mickorod Renard: all looks well to me

Aph: If not I'll leave the floor to Bruce and Cal

Aph: **If it's OK we'll put it in the wiki**

Aph: and report the changes to KIRA

Bruce: Oh, hey, Cal. . . didn't see you arrive.

Calvino Rabeni: :) I just materialized

Aph: um...

Mickorod Renard: hi Cal

Pila Mulligan: hi Cal

Calvino Rabeni: Hello

Aph: ok I will silently submerge into the background

San: hi everyone! phone distracted ~

Mickorod Renard: :))

Bruce: I felt that you summarized our concerns very well, Aph... and I really have nothing to suggest or add.

Violet: Hi San :)

Pila Mulligan: hi San

San: :)

Bruce: Today I sent everyone on the mailing list an excerpt from last Sunday's evening session -- with Cal as GoC.

Mickorod Renard: yes, thanks Bruce

Pila Mulligan: nice discussion

**Bruce: Although I was not at that session, I felt that it was an excellent "launching pad" for our discussion of "Sangha as a way of knowing."**

**Bruce: Aph began by saying that from a sangha she expects support and some form of teaching-learning.**

**Bruce: --- stressing sangha as "community"**

**Bruce: community of support.**

*Bruce wonders if he's going to be the only one talking.*

Pila Mulligan: :)

Calvino Rabeni: hehe

Mickorod Renard: I like that idea, and I am sure Wok has in most been that

Aph: community **support f- but for what?**

Violet: :)

Calvino Rabeni: That's a good question Aphro

Aph: **support spiritually? intellectually? emotionally?**

Mickorod Renard: in nature though, the explorations we make are in some respects in subject matter that is not everyday stuff

Pila Mulligan: is there an introductory presentation for this session? It looks like we are into the topic already

Aph: **Traditionally it has been spiritual support**

Bruce: I'm "hearing" from you Aph, that you expect sangha to **include some "purpose" or "intentionality"**

Calvino Rabeni: I was thinking along those lines

Aph: yes. No Pila there is no introduction but Bruce sent out a summary of a discussion at the Pavilion on the sangha that raised a few ideas

Bruce: Good question, Pila. I was hoping that the chat-log from Cal's session would be that intro. . . but am up for more. . .

Pila Mulligan: ok

Bruce: Traditionally, of course, **"sangha" is one of the three jewels in Buddhism. . .**

Bruce: and **specifically meant the monks and nuns** who had taken vows.

Bruce: But that leaves me out.

Bruce: ;-)

Calvino Rabeni: I think, starting at square one, that the word has a kind of exotic tone to us, indicating the possibility of something that may exist in another culture, but that we're drawn towards and at the same time not sure of

Aph: nods

Calvino Rabeni: And **it seems to strike up against the pride and isolation of individualism**

Aph: strike up?

Violet: Mm, Cal...

Calvino Rabeni: so **the "support for what" idea rubs up a feeling of not being supported**

Mickorod Renard: some of the subject matter we tend to cover borders on the extraordinary, because of this I **believe a Sangha type thought would inspire trust amongst ourselves that our thoughts are cultivated in a respectful way, finding guidance amongst ourselves**

Pila Mulligan: :)

Calvino Rabeni: or **against not having a predefined idea of what to be supported for, what purpose**

San: **support for developing as a human being**

Aph: When one follows a path that is challenging, **one has the choice of going it alone or getting help from sympathetic community**

Calvino Rabeni: yes that's a good one Santo

San: sangha can be

San: also in the realm of anything that is unseen

San: for example

Bruce: Does that **"supporting community"** need to be visible, tangible, physical?

Aph: but I feel sangha has a more specific meaning; it implies that the others within the sangha have something to offer more **than sympathy. Experience, knowledge, expertise**

Aph: I look for those 4 thngs

Aph: that form of support

Mickorod Renard: you mean like blood brothers or the like?

San: **it's not necessarily other people**, is my point

San: can be

San: buddha realm

San: **plants**

Calvino Rabeni: It reminds me of the wizard of oz story .. **the three characters were thinking they needed someone to give them a heart / brain / courage, but they had it all along, just needed someone to tell them it was there**

San: birds

Aph: blood brothers?

Calvino Rabeni: Agree, Santo

Aph: I like that.

San: holy places

Violet: I do, too.

Calvino Rabeni: **could there be a sangha-of-one? A person who decides the trees and wind are a teacher, and has the intention to learn?**

Bruce: So, **a sangha brings out the true essence of who we are - - - or tries to?**

Aph: the original concept of sangha included beings other than humans?

San: why not

San: it can

Aph: depends on what we are needing Bruce

Bruce: Hmmm.

Aph: I am not sure if I have a true essence

Violet: Hi Druth :)

San: hello druth :)

Pila Mulligan: hi Druth

Aph: Aph waves at druth

druth Vlodovic: hi guys

Bruce: One of the metaphors used last Sunday evening was **the "container" -- that Sangha provides a container for sharing, for honesty, for growth, for protection. . .**

Bruce: Hey, druth!

Pila Mulligan: maybe quintessence, Aph

Aph: Pila?

Mickorod Renard: **perhaps we can try to define what would be the order of our development, so as a Sangha, or community , we are pulling in the same direction?**

Calvino Rabeni: **Perhaps imagination starts to create the sangha, which then materializes** or becomes more socially realized

San: yes, imagination is key

Mickorod Renard: Hi Druth

Aph: If we imagine the sangha it will come?

Calvino Rabeni: but I like the suggestion to venture to look at the specifics, Mick

Aph: nods

Bruce: I'm not sure that I would trust any sangha that was NOT imagined.

San: :)

Mickorod Renard: I was **thinking that if we have too many directions on the go at one time we will create fragmentation, the opposite of community**

Aph: but **it seems sangha is different for each of us**; we need different things

Calvino Rabeni: People to each other, even with an understanding of working together, are sometimes wise and sometimes idiots

Violet: :)

Bruce: Imagination seems to precede the sangha experience for me. . . and **commitment to the tangible, visible, group is difficult.**

Aph: so... that means a sangha can change...?

Calvino Rabeni: the fallback position is "the wise man learns more from the fool, than the fool from the wise man"

Bruce: **I imagine that the sangha will accept my idiocy.**

Calvino Rabeni: Yes, day to day, it changes

Violet: I like that, Cal.

Calvino Rabeni: :) Bruce

Aph: :-) Bruce

Bruce: **without that hope, I would never commit.**

Mickorod Renard: :)

Calvino Rabeni: and ones true friends learn from one's idiocy and make something of it to give back

San: lovely

Aph: a useful sangha is not judgemental but helpful

San: hmm, what's your definition of "helpful"

Aph: helps us understand ourselves better for one

Bruce: Hmmm. . . to be sure, Aph.

Calvino Rabeni: yes

San: :)

Bruce: **but the idea of safety is somehow also very important to me.**

Calvino Rabeni: and to deal with those troublesome blind spots

Bruce: **safety of the container.**

Calvino Rabeni: that's important

Mickorod Renard: do we still post on a public wiki?

Bruce: I think that the monks and nuns also knew this need to be safe.

San: know

Aph: perhaps that **is the simplest definition of a sangha- a safe container to grow and learn**

Aph: safe

Calvino Rabeni: nods

Aph: within

druth Vlodovic: **a "place" to grow out into yourself**

Mickorod Renard: I think I agree

Aph: yes druth!

Bruce: I honestly don't know whether our wiki is public or not -- Does one have to be "enrolled" to see it? I know that I have to log in to post anything there.

Calvino Rabeni: anyone can read it, Bruce

Bruce: and that's part of the safety, perhaps.

Aph: anyone can see it; have to log in to post

Bruce: kk. thanks, Aph.

Bruce: **Sangha seems to suggest an expectation -- or a whole bunch of expectations.**

Aph: does that make us more vulnerable?

Aph: being read on our wiki?

Bruce: I don't know, Aph.

Bruce: I don't feel especially vulnerable -- but perhaps that's because I protect myself pretty well.

Mickorod Renard: **I was thinking that it makes a sort of nonsense in having a Sangha for safety and containment when the wiki is public**

Bruce: I have an expectation of interconnection.

San: i would tend to agree with you Mickorod

Calvino Rabeni: Nods to Mick, this is an open container

Aph: I don't think the world reading the wiki is our sangha but I do feel the people who come here and talk are

druth Vlodovic: [14:35] Bruce: I don't feel especially vulnerable -- but perhaps that's because I protect myself pretty well.

druth Vlodovic: :)

druth Vlodovic: but when PaB tried having "private" (unrecorded) sessions they didn't last long

Aph: how do you protect yourself Bruce?

Bruce: Well, I try to watch what I say carefully -- sometimes so as not to sound like an idiot.

Calvino Rabeni: But there is the "hidden" part of it, which is the conversations that happen one-on-one, that are given some of their abilities by this WOK activity of the members

Aph: IMs you mean Cal?

Bruce: And yet, I realize that my idiocy might be the very thing that needs seeing/hearing.

Calvino Rabeni: Sure, or emails, or any other communications

Pila Mulligan: [14:25] Bruce: So, a sangha brings out the true essence of who we are -- or tries to?

[14:26] Aph: I am not sure if I have a true essence



quintessence: 'the most perfect embodiment of something' --

satsang: 'sat = true + sanga ... an assembly of persons who listen to, talk about, and assimilate the truth' -- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satsang>

-> in this discussion, sangha may mean a group talking about the quintessence of their awareness or experience

Mickorod Renard: Bruce, you always sound a non-idiot to me

Calvino Rabeni: other groups, and so forth

Bruce: heh heh, ty.

Aph: Thanks Pila

Aph: Hi Zen

Pila Mulligan: hi Zen

Zen: Hi all

Violet: Hi Zen :)

Calvino Rabeni: So any old club or class or meeting isn't satsang/sangha

Bruce: Cal spoke of a barber shop as one place that transmissions of value/truth can occur -- without the visible structures of traditional religion, etc.

Mickorod Renard: The point is, I, like Bruce, feel restrained (maybe for the good) by the thought that I may say something silly

Aph: I wonder what I embody most perfectly

**Bruce: It is inevitable that I say silly things.**

Bruce: It is part of who I am.

Calvino Rabeni: :)

Aph: we all do Bruce

Calvino Rabeni: you speak for myself Bruce

**Bruce: so, I seem to need containers that understand that and accept it.**

Aph: and define silly for me...

Violet: :)

**Bruce: I could not be a part of a sangha that did not accept me for who I am.**

Aph: yes, but not passively Bruce,

Mickorod Renard: but I wonder whether we may discover more if we feel free to divulge between ourselves

Aph: I feel we need to be able to butt up against edges

Mickorod Renard: deeper thoughts knowing that it's contained

Bruce: I have had such experiences of rejection many times. . . . **so my "imagination" needs to feel acceptance before I even attend such a group.**

Zen: the trouble is that sanghas change

Aph: sharpening my understanding...

Zen: you might start in one and find it totally different after a while

Bruce: dynamic sangha, Zen?

Aph: is that a trouble or an advantage Zen?

Calvino Rabeni: Yes we butt against edges, and get an uncomfortable feeling, and the dilemma is one of discrimination at that point

Zen: **a growing organic dynamic thing**

Mickorod Renard: Hi Zen

Aph: yes, but I learn from that discomfort- or can

Zen: it just is Aph

Aph: you always say that Zen!

Zen: it's ok as long as you can accept that

Aph: but there are different shades of IS-ness

Zen: It applies to all groups really

Calvino Rabeni: **The discomfort is a signal to sort things out, or a caution sign**

Mickorod Renard: I get the feeling sometimes that after such a period of attending Wok, many of us are getting pretty deep into this stuff

Zen: have seen people start groups and then feel they 'own' them

Bruce: Zen has had a lot of real-world experience with visible, intentional, communities of support . . . and retreats. Do you think of those as your sanghas, Zen?

Zen: when new people start to change things they object

Zen: I have a RL sangha yes

Aph: change just IS

Bruce: So, **stability is valued.**

Violet: Change is fine...it's inevitable, and if it's not good, then it gives you a reason to broaden your horizons again

Calvino Rabeni: by now most of us have probably talked to friends about how / why they moved in and out of groups

Aph: **it's our ability to work with change that is valuable**

Zen: yes Aph

Zen: hit the nail on the head

Violet: Yes

**Bruce ponders moving into and out of groups.**

Aph: which doesn't mean we have no values or beliefs **but those values or beliefs incorporate change**

Bruce: wow.. wonderful point, Aph.

Aph: or can

Aph: Hard to do

Zen: fluid and flexible

Aph: yes

Zen: but don't we have a tendency to stuckness?

Aph: as we get older my brain as well as my muscles tend to flex less

Zen: yeh

Zen: how about our mind?

Violet: We get into the habit of things..what's familiar is comfortable

Aph: sticking to the familiar and the safe? yes. It's in our makeup

Zen: stuck in old mindsets?

Bruce: I guess for me it is a matter of trust - - and often I find it (well, not often, but USUALLY) I find it easier to trust animals and plants and the natural order of things, rather than people (no offense, anyone).

Zen: good to notice in ourselves

Calvino Rabeni: The diverse group can have strains based on that, **or the diversity can result in a greater group intelligence .. interesting to ask what that depends on ... yes Bruce, trust for one thing seems basic**

Mickorod Renard: I dont know, I am getting on now but I am getting ever more hungry and so forth for knowledge

Aph: hmmm not sure if I trust my cats

San: no offense taken :)

Aph: lol

**Bruce ponders the "psychology" of sangha.**

Zen: **trust can induce freezing though Bruce...freezing people into how we expect them to be?**

druth Vlodovic: there was talk about how search engines adapt to show people the kind of things they search for, until they end up living in a world consisting of only what they want to know

Zen: trust seems built on expectations

Bruce: Mmmm.. **I don't think I expect anyone to be anything -- except non-judgmental.**

Aph: interesting druth

Calvino Rabeni: I think one skill is to recognize the unique things some other group member has to offer and bring things to where they recognize their value

Aph: I expect people to BE judgmental

Bruce: yes, druth, and what a drag that is.

Mickorod Renard: yes, good point Druth

Aph: yes- focus on others strengths Cal

Mickorod Renard: **this is key to the sangha, we must be open to paths**

Zen: reminds me of Christians I know who only read Christian books

Bruce: Is **there an expectation of reciprocation** among sangha participants?

Aph: and acknowledge them if you can. It encourages trust

Violet: Mm, Zen

Zen: like reading a Christian book on evolution

Aph: or Buddhists who only read Buddhist books

Pila Mulligan: group identity is one of the most common causes of conflict

Zen: (not meaning to offend Christians. just some I met were like that)

Aph: when it becomes them and us

Mickorod Renard: me too, although I read all sorts now, Muslim , Buddhist all of them

Bruce: But, I thought **that sangha as "container" implied a membrane . . . and an identification.**

Pila Mulligan: Claire mentioned that at the end of the PaB session

Zen: yeh I watch this in myself...like only reading Zen books

Aph: we read journals and newspapers that support our political viewpoints

Bruce: "we" are the ones inside the sangha and "they" are the ones outside of it?

Zen: find Zen people can be like that too

Violet: Our "tribes" can give us a valuable sense of belonging....but there's still a world outside them

Zen: **we reinforce each other's beliefs in sanghas** is the point

Calvino Rabeni: Every tribe has its sacred cows

Bruce: **"Belonging" as one criteria of sangha?**

Zen: is that always a good thing?

Aph: I don't like the idea of a sangha being a power structure; a sangha can change for each of us depending on our needs and interests.

Aph: **I have many sanghas**

druth Vlodovic: any time you step in a new direction you upset your solid ground you use for security

Zen: yes Druth

Mickorod Renard: I suppose this is a risk of focus

Zen: so tempting to cling to some belief though

Bruce: I have few few RL sanghas (only one I can think of at the moment), but I have many many many non-visible sanghas.

Zen: especially if it is comforting

Calvino Rabeni: I think belonging is a ground state of humans, but it's not necessarily a group identity or awareness

Violet: So we learn to walk with a spring in our steps, so we can hop over the loose soil and keep moving :)

Aph: not surprising Bruce as you are a hermit

Aph: Aph smiles at Violet

Violet: ...nothing wrong with hermits! :p

Aph: didn't say there was

Mickorod Renard: **I think we must recognize that the fact we are here, in wok, in a Sangha , means we have common cause**

Pila Mulligan: friendship often leads people to sharing their views, even dissimilar views

Aph: or a common interest

druth Vlodovic: **a purpose might be more valuable to a sanga than a structure**

Bruce: It is a chicken/egg deal, Aph. . . Perhaps I am a hermit BECAUSE I could not find viable sanghas.

druth Vlodovic: acting as a loose guide

San: bye dear hermit thrushes ~ work calls

Violet: Take care, San :)

Pila Mulligan: bye San

Bruce: Hey, folks, -- we will meet again in two weeks....

Calvino Rabeni: Fly well

Aph: yes, perhaps Bruce. Good point

Mickorod Renard: bye San, be well

Zen: bye San

Bruce: on the 15th of December.

Aph: Bye

Aph: Bye! San

druth Vlodovic: cya san

Violet: Is that the current schedule? Every other week?

Bruce: Between now and then, Cal and I will hone in a bit on some themes - - and we'll still be discussing sangha.

Bruce: yes, every other week.

Mickorod Renard: that was quick :(

Aph: San and Bleu are my art /creative sangha in SL

Calvino Rabeni: yes and/or satsang

Bruce: and we will also need to find a good topic for January.

Violet: Okay....that works a little better for me....

Aph: unless we want to continue with this. The list of ideas will be posted on the wiki - somewhere...

Bruce: So, thank you all very much for being here today. . . I look forward to editing this chat log and posting it. . .

Bruce: that's always a sort of sangha experience for me.

Violet: :)

Pila Mulligan: thanks for doing it Bruce

Mickorod Renard: perhaps the commitment we have made to each other is bonding enough to inspire what we are looking for

Aph: Thanks Bruce for facilitating the discussion

Mickorod Renard: thanks Bruce

Aph: always very gently done

Bruce: well, thank all of you, too!

Bruce: ;-)

Violet: I'm going to head kitchenwise now....thank you, Bruce. Be well, everyone :)

Aph: Bye

Aph: Bye! everyone.

Bruce: May all be well and happy.

Pila Mulligan: bye everyone -- and thanks

Violet: :)

Mickorod Renard: bye Aph

Zen: bye everyone :)

Mickorod Renard: bye Pila

Calvino Rabeni: Bye