

Continua of Practice Series

CONTINUA OF PRACTICE: FROM DENIAL TO OPENNESS

by Rodney Smith | June 30, 2015

“Awakening: A Paradigm Shift of the Heart,” chapter 11 will deepen your understanding of this talk.

There is an acceptable tension we each carry and are reluctant to address spiritually. That tension holds our thoughts, attitudes, self-beliefs, and projections together in a systematic self-serving way. It is the collection of aggregates laced together with our narrative that we will protect at all costs, and it is all tied to our current worldview. The practice begins within this worldview where everything is tightly controlled around a condensed center called me. We keep ourselves in control by refusing to examine and question our way out - this is denial. Denial will not look at facts beyond the opinions it has of those facts. Yet dharma is the undefended fact, and facing facts is fundamental to dharma growth. This, then, is a key continuum to understand

Slowly as we cross the continuum, we loosen a little, letting new experiences in, perceiving from a quieter vantage point, and slowly opening to what we are seeing. Our hearts warm and we feel more inclusive. However, opinions suddenly form around these new feelings and here we may stumble into the false nirvana of liberalism, where we pride ourselves in our inclusiveness and egalitarianism. One expression of this false nirvana is when we wonder why everyone doesn't see the truths we see and hold the same view. This is a warning sign of a perception gone astray, and if not corrected, will prevent us from being truly open and moving forward. Openness does not come with or from a view. Openness is wide open like the sky allowing everything to move through it, and is the willingness to be receptive and nonjudgmental regardless of circumstances.

But given the dangers of life, how can we ever expect to be truly open? This is not a calculated opening, but rather an opening without reservations. We have no choice but to open since the dharma is inclusive, the good, the bad, the just, and the unjust; all beings, all things without exception. There is no unity without absolute inclusion. Leave one thing out and we are back where we started. It is only my egoic self that protests, and here we come to the counter influence of the continuum. Either we pull back from further openness and maintain our defensiveness and denial or we surrender to the limitations of the world. We are forced to decide whether to see in unity or forever live within duality. To see life within the unity of existence means we see without contention.



See [Series Overview](#) for a description of this diagram.

FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

Let the openness you practice in formal meditation transfer into your activities. Instead of letting the ground of your opinions be the basis for your actions, allow openness to reign. Remember that opinions and denial work hand in hand. Your opinions are what you want to believe, and you are closed to the opposite side. What if you did not operate from your judgments and accessed the greater space of allowance before any action was taken? How would your actions differ when you intentionally operated from being open and allowing?

This series is based on the book, "[Awakening: A Paradigm Shift of the Heart](#)" (Shambhala 2014).