

# Continua of Practice Series

## CONTINUA OF PRACTICE: SOPHISTICATION TO INNOCENCE

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by Rodney Smith | November 3, 2015

“Awakening: A Paradigm Shift of the Heart,” will deepen your understanding of these talks.

For most of us the ability to enlarge our knowledge base is essential to our success, and success in our careers, schooling, and home life almost always depends upon knowing more. Sophistication, the skillful use of knowledge in a civilized and cultured manner is valued, but innocence, which can be seen as guileless and inexperienced, is not. Much of our self-image is formed by how knowledgeable and sophisticated we are and we can find ourselves competing with others to prove how much information we have obtained.

When we know something, we place a fixed objective view onto life and freeze it within our past associations. The problem is that nothing is fixed, but knowledge does not allow that fact or move with circumstances. To apply a set response (knowledge) to a constantly moving system (the world) misses the mark. Knowing confuses the present with time past when the knowledge was first obtained. We employ a response appropriate to a specific moment in the past to a current situation, but life has moved on, and that conditioned response is no longer aligned with the truth of reality. Usually our actions are only partially successful when they are conditioned from previous associations.

The question becomes, is there a way for the current moment to act through us without engaging our backlog of knowledge? If so, we become fluid within our responses and spontaneous in our actions. Let us explore and see if this is possible. Knowledge can only be communicated by thought. If we can be present to what we are thinking, then we can become quiet and let the thoughts go rather than respond from the conditioning of those thoughts. It may seem risky to respond from the innocence of not knowing, but with practice we find something coming from these “new” responses that is truly creative and enjoyable.

The false nirvana comes when we feel the power of knowing with all its accompanying prestige. The knowledge begins to extend into the spiritual realm as we read more sutras and gather the intellectual background that make us sound like we “know” all about the spiritual path. That is a truly “false” nirvana since that very knowledge keeps us from moving forward in our practice. Our minds are so geared to listen for intellectual knowledge we may miss the arrogance of our message. The counter-influence comes when we realize that to move forward we genuinely have to become innocent and quiet to everything we have learned.



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

## FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

As we mature, we grow into a view of life that is shrouded within our learned knowledge. That knowledge guides and directs us in making decisions and navigating our way, but knowledge sets us up to act from what life has been, not from what it is currently offering. This week when your knowledge says, “respond or act this way,” pause and see if a new response comes forward that is not conditioned. We might be surprised by the creative richness of this pause when we allow ourselves to be affected by quiet.

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