## Continua of Practice Series

## CONTINUA OF PRACTICE: FROM THE HORIZONTAL TO THE VERTICAL

by Rodney Smith | August 4, 2015

"Awakening: A Paradigm Shift of the Heart," chapter 2 will deepen your understanding of this talk.

We often miss how close the sacred. We make it into a journey of distance and time when actually it is an excursion into stillness. We look forward to see how far we have to go or backward to see how far we have come. We want some proof that all this work has been worthwhile and that proof is in comparison to what we were and what we are becoming. Though this comparison supports our spiritual egoic image, we will not find the sacred in the past or the future, but only within the living present.

The horizontal and the vertical are perpendicular to one another (think of the x and y lines of a graph) but only intersect at one location, the present. The horizontal world of conditioning is time driven and labor intensive. To the left as far as the mind can see, is time past, and to the right is the infinite expanse of time future. Since future and past have no reality outside of thought, the horizontal is both composed and driven by concepts. The present, from the horizontal perspective, is a moment between time past and time future, a deprived moment on its way to some other time. When we look through the present with abstract thoughts, we do not see the sacred. The sacred is revealed when we arrive in the present fully quiet and still. It is at this intersecting point that all life occurs. The rest of the graph is conceptual. We can begin to see how little time we spend in reality, which is the sacred, and how much time we spend immersed in our thinking.

Our spiritual journey is to rest where the X and Y axes meet acknowledging both the conceptual play of the horizontal and the timeless void of the vertical. Many of us like to hover around the X/Y intersection but not arrive fully. We want to know the sacred is at hand without committing our lives to it. The closer we come to the intersection, the lighter and more buoyant we feel and the more we understand what the sacred is. We can then assume a spiritual image where others might even listen to our "teaching" all the while pretending to be further along than we are. The egoic strength that is garnered through approximating the intersection becomes the false nirvana of this continuum.

The counter influence becomes apparent when we tire of playing the game of hide and seek from that which is ever-present and turn fully toward the sacred. Now just as the X axis completely merges with the Y axis at the zero point, so too does the vertical become one with the horizontal within the present. Time is understood as functional and relative, but nothing is lived as if it were outside of the here and now.

	False Nirvana	Paradigm Shift	
Divided Mind			Unified Mind
Struggle			End of struggle
Self-centeredness			Nonseparation
Counter-influence			

See <u>Series Overview</u> for a description of this diagram.

## FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

Work with the sense of there being two universes, the horizontal and the vertical. Notice that they intersect only in the here and now. How much time do you spend within each one? What are the qualities of each, and how does each support your life? During meditation are you abiding within the horizontal or the vertical? Are there times when one is more appropriate than the other? What has to be surrendered in the horizontal for the vertical to be perceived?

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