

Continua of Practice Series

CONTINUA OF PRACTICE: FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS TO ALL BEINGS

by Rodney Smith | July 14, 2015

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

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.



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

FOR YOUR CONTEMPLATION

Without judging notice how self-centered you are. Observe how self-focused your thoughts, emotions, and actions tend to be. Almost every action is taken for self-service. Even your spiritual journey is to your advantage. This is how everyone begins his or her spiritual journey, but to move forward you must recognize how trapped you are within this perception. Ask yourself honestly if you have ever placed someone's welfare above your own, perhaps your children or a relative? What were the conditions that made this possible? There is joy in self-relinquishment but you cannot get there by pushing yourself away, only by treasuring all things equally.

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