

Continuum as a Way of Life

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The core experience of Continuum is the co-creative encounter, a direct experience of consciousness meeting the unknown and unknowable in the present moment. In this sacred union, there is no goal nor agenda, just the intention to listen and participate with what it being revealed. With the focus on responding from deep listening, Continuum proposes a radically new paradigm for being human. This chapter is intended to explore how we can extend the basic precepts of Continuum to daily life—and what the results might be.

In a Continuum class, the cocreative encounter takes the form of awareness meeting sensation, the somatic encounter between sound and tissue as it is revealed to a listening, participating consciousness. This way of actively meeting the moment sharply contrasts with the more common experience of acting from habit, without thought. We humans bring to any given moment our personal and cultural prejudices, fears, hopes, beliefs, coping strategies, and agendas learned from past experiences. The radical act of meeting any moment of life from the perspective of sensation offers new unexpected alternatives to life lived by repeating patterns from the past. In the process of cocreative encounter, we consciously open ourselves to be affected and moved by our experience in that moment. We resist our patterned responses in favor of

letting ourselves be informed by our spontaneous interaction with that moment.

“Escaping those patterns can lead to unexpected outcomes.” A Continuum participant told the story of entering her New York apartment building elevator late one night. The crowded elevator emptied, but one young man remained. As soon as the elevator door closed the man pulled out a knife. The woman, a long-time Continuum practitioner, automatically focused on her sensations. Without thinking, she followed her impulse and asked the man, “Would your mother be proud what you are about to do?” Much to her amazement the young man crumpled to the floor in sobs and ran out when the elevator door opened.

This response to the situation was totally irrational. In a different situation, it might have gotten the woman killed. In this case, however, her willingness to follow an irrational impulse probably saved her life. She recognized that her response to the man in the elevator was not her usual response to threatening situations. In the critical moment she trusted her radical impulse despite the fact that it was irrational and uncharacteristic

Thus, cocreative encounter requires us to be permeable to such impulses as well as anchored in our own self-knowledge. Without this anchoring, we can be swept away by the unpredictability of spontaneous experience. In order to root ourselves in a firm sense of who we are and how we are affected by our environment and the people in it, we must know

ourselves, our perceptual patterns, and our place in the universe. Being conscious of the origin of our response patterns from the Continuum perspective helps us to escape the frenzied cycles of daily life and seek true cocreative encounter in each moment.

The Continuum Universe

In Continuum, we start from the premise that we do not know our ultimate role in the bigger picture of life on this planet. What we do know is that we are intrinsically interconnected with every aspect of life. Chemically, we are made of the same stuff as stars; biologically, we share structural similarities with other species. Like plants, we are composed mostly of water. And the composition of that water, the ratio of salt (blood, as well as synovial, interstitial, lymphatic, arterial, and venous fluids) to fresh water (cerebral-spinal fluid) in our bodies, mirrors the composition of the planet's waters. This fundamental, physical connectedness and belonging to the entire web of life has profound implications for human existence.

These biochemical facts of human existence connect us to 4 billion years of planetary intelligence. We now know that the universe is expanding and the planet is in the process of a constant evolution. The implication is that there is an evolving intelligent coherence to the past 4 billion years, an intelligence that includes and is reflected in the amazing dance of anabolic (expansive, growth-producing) and catabolic (destructive, death-producing) forces in all living creatures. Mathematical cosmologists such as Brian Swimme expound

upon the miraculous precision of expansion/contraction ratios that have enabled life as we know it on this planet. Natural scientists in biology, chemistry, and physics all attest to the unfathomable genius of intelligence that permeates our cosmos. As newcomers in this 4 billion-year lineage, we have claim to its heritage of evolving creation. In a sense, we have two umbilical cords: one connecting us to our personal mother and one linking us to the universal evolution of life.

This dual heritage, this link to a history that is both personal and cosmic, means that at any moment we have the option to tune our awareness to the field of coherent intelligence that has resulted in our current life form and use it as the reference point for responding to a given situation. We can free ourselves from the effects of our brain's survival circuitry and unplug from the patterning we inherited from our parents or built up through experience. Instead, we can plug into the heart of the cosmos, connecting to a manifestation of the deep source of all life.

The Mechanized Universe

Human babies gestate within and emerge from a totipotent embryological field, a special environment that supports the zygote's ability to produce all that is needed for it to become a human baby. Within that field, the development from fertilized egg to fully formed human is shaped by the spiraling fluids of an energetic force rich with innumerable possibilities. We

look at a newborn and see a universe of possibilities for this developing human. Yet so many lives do not fully flower, never realizing their full potential.

To some extent, this can be attributed to social forces that pattern our reactions and cut us off from the cosmic forces that shape us. Since the Industrial Revolution, life on earth has become increasingly mechanized. We now have machines to replace not only human jobs, but human body parts. We look to machines to solve problems from adolescent boredom to healing.

This mechanized approach to life has afforded innumerable comforts in all areas of human existence, yet it also casts a deep shadow. As our lives become more and more machine-dependent, we get further and further from reliance on our own innate resources of knowing. The power we have given to machines has produced mechanized, compartmentalized thinking in ourselves. We value an ability to maximize speed and productivity, to do more with less; the toll this pace takes on human being is often not even in the equation. Our culture is permeated by rapid-fire images that subliminally encourage rapid responses. The mere speed of modern life can create cognitive overload so that our felt experience doesn't even register. We even turn to machines to tell us what is wrong and right with our bodies. Medical technology has undoubtedly created miraculous advances, but the more we depend on machines, the less we can discover our own body's wisdom and ingenuity. In this mechanized world, there is neither space nor time for truly encountering—either ourselves or others.

Accessing the Connected World

What is needed, in the face of these forces of mechanization, is a return to a nature-based perspective that acknowledges and values the interconnections between all beings. The mechanized worldview sees the real world as a realm composed of separate, self-contained objects; a nature-based perspective perceives that all objects exist as subject-objects, all coexisting in ever-changing relationships to one another, constantly affecting one another. This relational perspective requires us to take into account the interconnectedness and intrinsic wholeness of everything we call life. It demands that we respond and react to life from our internally referenced experience of interconnectedness, rather than from the external demands of the mechanistic world.

Approaching life from this perspective frees us from the burdens of our cultural patterning. When we feel our experience through the body, acknowledging our own internal power to know what is nurturing in food, environment, or activity, we are no longer vulnerable to external ideas about what we *should* feel, think, do. Neither are we dependent on our emotional reactions of fear or hope; the information we seek is available in the present, through the direct knowing of the silent world of sensation. To feel ourselves is to meet life from the perspective of the experienced reality of here and now, not through the filter of other peoples' ideas about reality or our internalized shoulds.

This does not mean that we are oblivious to the ideas and experiences of those around us. On the contrary, the enhanced sensitivity to our own felt experience, and to our connectedness to all else, makes us much more sensitive to other points of view. Calm confidence in the value of our own experience makes us more open to valuing the experiences of others.

An Elemental Trinity

Continuum's awareness of body and of felt experience is captured in three functions of anatomy, each of which represents a different use of body tissue as well as potential changes in the tissue itself. Just as matter reflects meaning, these three functional anatomies reflect three very different ways of being in the world. I refer to these as an "elemental trinity" because, like the Holy Trinity of Christianity, these three paradigms provide a sacred model of unity and diversity in the human organism. For me, each of these anatomies—cultural, primordial, and cosmic—represents an elemental force of nature, a building block for transformation. Emilie Conrad, the creator of Continuum, focused on the physical changes in tissue when it is used for these different functions. I wish to explore the meanings and implications of this trinity for Continuum as a way of life and as a symbol of our interconnectedness.

Cultural Anatomy—Earth

In this most familiar function of human tissue, our paradigm is earth-bound Newtonian causality. This is a linear, biomechanical view of life, the one on which our mechanized world is largely based. Human beings are closed systems of solid, dense matter. From this perspective, we are objects in a world of objects, each of which is a self-contained, closed system. This paradigm is anthropocentric, that is, centered around the needs and desires of humans. Life revolves around the individual I, the human ego.

In this paradigm, control and power over others are assumed values. The foundation for living is fear based, structured around a sense that each person is in competition with every other being for the limited resources available. Cause-and-effect thinking reigns supreme; there is an underlying ongoing assessment of everything as good or bad, right or wrong. Behavior is controlled internally and externally by “shoulds” that provide the basis for those judgments.

The movement that comes from bodies living life from this paradigm is linear, forward in orientation, bounded, and goal oriented. People function through mimicking others, creating repetitive patterns. Language and self-expression are bound by the dictates of consensual appropriateness. What you see is what you get; what cannot be proven (made visible through some process of logic, belief, or repeatable experiment) does not exist. Health in this

model of life is defined by a lack of symptoms of illness, as defined by Western medicine.

Time is understood in terms of clock time, *chronos* in the Greek model. This bounded meaning of time creates a sense of urgency. Speed and productivity—efficiency—are valued. “Time is money” and time is a resource that can be wasted, if it is not spent working toward preset goals. This is our mechanized world, whose foundations lay in the Industrial Revolution, which, along with the nature-force of gravity, has been the primary shaping force of this cultural usage of the human body.

Primordial Anatomy—Water

The primordial anatomy operates from an aquatic, biomorphic, relational model of the human organism. From this perspective, the primary shaping force is the embryonic field with its directional waves, which create the template for the structure of the organism. The organism is seen as semipermeable, not closed as it is in the cultural perspective; this means that humans are changed by their constant interactions with each other and with the forces (seen and unseen) in their environment. Synchronicity, C. G. Jung’s name for the acausal, connecting principle of life, is the basis for meaning making.

Rather than the I-based identity of the cultural model, the primordial perspective is we-based; the world is seen as a multiplicative network of relationships interacting and affecting each other. Primordial identity is species

inclusive, not anthropocentric; the “we” experience includes every kind of life. Humans are seen as belonging to each other and to the universe. Relationships and harmonic resonance are of primary value; belonging and connectedness are assumed facts. Consequently, “yes/both/and” replaces “either/or” thinking in the primordial worldview. Rather than being based in fear, the primordial function is based in the heart-centered pleasure of personally felt love.

When the human being is functioning from the primordial paradigm, movement takes the shape of arcs and curves; directional, interpenetrating waves that start one place and end somewhere else; contained fluid resonances of nonlocal communication. Urgency is mediated in the primordial view, as time is seen as a relativized space–time continuum, thus qualifying the urgency of immediate action. Health, from this perspective, is a matter of the system’s coherency and adaptability, evidenced by the ability of its fluids to receive more electrical information and absorb change according to the demands of the circumstances.

Cosmic Anatomy—Air

The primordial approach to being human characterized the work of Continuum until 2005, when Emilie described a third function of human anatomy, the cosmic anatomy. This way of using the human body is based upon neither earth-bound logic nor aquatic directional fluidity. Instead, it is anchored in quantum physics; its reference point is the cosmos, or the unknowable unknown. The human organism from this perspective is an open system

without structure or form. Identity is associated with being a part of the all-inclusive field of Divinity that subsumes all life—a profound oneness with all of life, seen and unseen, known and unknown. This paradigm is based in an impersonal love for the differentiated oneness of life. Communication is nonverbal, telepathic communion. The silent void is the source of All. Nurturance comes from and through the cosmos, rather than from any material reality. From this perspective, life is connected to an accessible, simultaneous resonance of all fluids from the galaxy to every living cell.

Movement in the functional cosmic perspective is nondirectional or omnidirectional, elongated, formless waves with no beginning, middle, or end. Hybernative suspension, devoid of urgency, redundancy, or survival-driven patterning, characterizes the mode of being. Cosmic time is timeless time, *kairos*, a timing based on the propitiousness of the moment. The human organism is seen as an evolving structure whose tissue acts as a superconductor of the universal intelligence.

The cosmic anatomy, with its focus on the wedding of flesh and spirit, is most suitable for meditative circumstances of deep transformation in which there is no need to perform or produce according to external exigencies. In this modality, the human organism is the most mutable, the least stabilized in form. The cosmic anatomy is not a vehicle for escaping intolerable experiences in daily life; indeed, it requires utmost presence to embody the state of cosmic anatomy. However, it can help us to step back and live through such

experiences, assimilating the felt experience. When we function from this state, unrealized possibilities of coherence can take shape in and through our bodies as we are transformed by the wisdom of the cosmos. It delivers us to realms of unimagined potential.

These elemental paradigms all exist in and through the human body. They are facts of human existence. Our uninhibited awareness gives us access to each modality according to the needs of the moment; in any given moment, all three perspectives can be activated. For example, problem solving from a cultural view is about me, my needs, my goals; from a primordial perspective, problem solving is approached with the aim of reaching a species-inclusive “we” solution. Through the cosmic lens, the entire evolution of the universe is considered as part of the solution. Obviously, different situations call for more of one or another perspective; all are always present in the very fact of human existence.

Our organisms—our bodies—are constantly being shaped by this trinity; once we have mapped them with our bodies, we can no longer live as if we are only separate units of anthropocentric impulses. We grow a capacity not only to move from one paradigm to another, but also to be constantly informed by all three. When we add the fire element of passion or desire, the trinity becomes a powerful force for transformation. We are ready to live life as an encounter.

The Encounter

The encounter is the central object of the Continuum way of life. Encountering requires a radical openness to interaction with the now, which allows the magic of unexpected surprises to unfold without our having to manipulate ourselves or our environment. We are neither controlled by our world nor controlling it according to our desires; instead, we participate in cocreating our experience by meeting the moment with relational awareness, knowing that our thoughts, feelings, and actions affect the unfolding of the now even as we are affected by each moment.

The practice of Continuum gives us the tools to approach encounter. Through Continuum, we form a relationship with the deeper self that connects our personal inner landscape to all that lies beyond the boundaries of our skin. We contact original impulses that are close to the pulse of life as it is taking shape. In practice, the reference point from which we depart and to which we return is sensation—a visual image, an auditory message or imprint, a kinesthetic experience, or an intuitive knowing. We come to trust these experienced sensations as facts of our inner world. As we participate in an ongoing dialectic with the invisible source of these internally felt happenings, we come to trust our experience as irrefutable points of departure for our journey.

I emphasize the phrase *points of departure* because the slice of reality that is our felt experience is fact only in this context. In fact, it is possible that

this felt experience occurring in the inner landscape may not have an external component. In a Continuum class, for example, I may feel a symphony of sensations tickling, pulsing, pricking, percolating, or undulating without there being any visible evidence of such movements. Similarly, dreams are powerful felt experiences that may or may not have any face value. Nonetheless, dreams, like felt movement or any internal experience, are facts in that they are a starting point for the exploration of the deeper truths revealing themselves in the now.

Thus, felt experience is the raw data from which we interact with the mystery of life in any given moment, and through which we reach encounter. Through the active process of cross-fertilization between our awareness and the subject of its focus, new, nonpatterned, unpredictable, and uncontrollable events come into being. We could say that a new version of reality is born, whether for purposes of healing, creativity, intimacy, or simply for feeling more vitally connected with ourselves, the world, others in the world, and the Divine. In Continuum, these new truths might manifest as shifts in tissue. In daily life, the product of an encounter with the unknown might take the form of insight, clarity, or action.

Encounter as a Way of Life

Regardless of the resulting byproduct of encountering the unknown, encountering as a way of life means to be in constant dialogue with life itself. We meet a moment by listening to its effect on us, and on the situation as a

whole. In order to do this, we must be able to separate ourselves from our experience. It is the reflective I that encounters. Encountering requires the observing I to be actively interacting with perceived experience rather than reacting or being swept away. If the I is not separate from as well as related to the experience, it will be either consumed by the experience or cut off from it and, in either case, not able to feel.

For example, we can easily be entranced by the beauty of a magnificent sunset. Simply surrendering to this event is a valid, valuable experience—particularly appropriate when the experience is positive and we just want to enjoy the moment. When we are engaged in an experience that is traumatic or unpleasant, on the other hand, the balance between engagement and observation inherent in encountering makes it possible to stay present in the situation and potentially benefit from it, no matter how difficult or undesirable it may become.

Time is a factor in encounter, in that we need enough time immersed in an experience to truly feel it rather than simply respond to it. However, as long as we are merged with an event, we are not relating to it; we are in it. Thus, encounter requires both time to immerse oneself in a silent felt experience, and then time to separate from the experience enough to relate to it. In the example of the sunset, this means not only experiencing awe at its beauty, but also having the felt sense of the experience of awe itself as a revelation of the sacred mystery of life. The sense of awe comes to us from the mystery through the

experience of the sunset. In the encounter, we relate to the experience of awe, letting it permeate and penetrate us, listening into being the stirrings of information that result. Through the vehicle of the sunset, the mystery reveals itself to us as it reveals us to ourselves.

Daring to open our sensory awareness to be cross-fertilized by experience in this way requires the internal strength to withstand the collapse of reality defined by what is known. We must surrender what we think we know in order to discover deeper levels of reality. In a Continuum dive, this surrender may take the form of physical shifts in the quality of specific tissue, in fluidity of motion, or in the ability to suspend a limb in space. In daily life, it may take the form of an “aha” insight or a shift in perspective that challenges familiar understanding.

We respond from our newly cross-fertilized self; we listen, look, feel the influences of our action on the situation, be it a movement situation in Continuum or a situation in daily life. The dialogue between our felt experience and the mystery goes on 24/7—at night in our dreams and in our responses to them; during the day at work; in the evening when we decide what to eat and how to spend our free time, when to socialize and when to be internal. This ongoing dialectic provides a basis for restoring our individual, local lives to their proper place in the time-space continuum. Encountering each moment, we participate in a conscious, intimate relationship with the sacred realms of the invisible from which we have been too-long estranged. In the encounter, we

are being formed and informed by some deeper intelligence. Living this way, we are constantly changed as we engage in a continual process of evolution. We begin to experience life as a deeply relational, creative process as we participate in cocreating the field in which we live and grow.

From this perspective, our dialectical existence includes simultaneous participation in many radiating circles of life: our individual existence, our personal relationships, the culture at large, the planet and all its life forms and ecosystems, the solar system and its universes, and all that is beyond in dimensions unseen and as yet undiscovered. As intrinsic parts of the whole, we belong to an evolving intelligence that reveals itself to us in every moment, if only we listen. In short, our encounter allows us to experience the fact that we are connected to everything.

In Continuum, we see evidence that the human organism, the latest development in the evolving consciousness of the universe, is still evolving. The experiment of Continuum seems to suggest that continued evolution may require conscious participation. Self-referential encounter is a way of life, one in which we are rooted in our own reality as we open to be affected by the invisible unknown, answering the invitation to evolve. Perhaps the divine unknown is constantly revealing itself through its encounter with our embodied selves, beckoning us to join in the act of co-created evolution. Can we hear the unborn possibilities enfolded into