



Presence: The Quality of Consciously Being Here, by Kabir Helminski

A common theme runs through all the great spiritual traditions. It goes by many names – awakening, recollection, mindfulness, dhyana, remembrance, zikr, presence – and by no name at all. This state of consciousness adds further dimensions to being in this world. Beyond the narrow band of awareness that has come to be accepted as the conventional state of consciousness is a faculty that is the master key to unlocking our latent human potential.

In certain teachings, such as Buddhism, the practice of mindful presence is the central fact. In Islam remembrance is the qualifier of all activity. In Christianity we must look to the experience of its great mystics and to prayer of the heart. But in all authentic spiritual psychologies this state of consciousness is a fundamental experience and requirement. For the purposes of our reflection I shall call it presence.

Presence signifies the quality of consciously being here. It is the activation of a higher level of awareness that allows all our other human functions – such as thought, feeling, and action – to be known, developed, and harmonized. Presence is the way in which we occupy space, as well as how we flow and move. Presence shapes our self-image and emotional tone. Presence determines the degree of our alertness, openness, and warmth. Presence decides whether we leak and scatter our energy or embody and direct it.

Presence is the human self-awareness that is the end result of the evolution of life on this planet. Human presence is not merely quantitatively different from other forms of life; humanity represents a new form of life, of concentrated spiritual energy sufficient to produce will. With will, the power of conscious choice, human beings can formulate intentions, transcend their instincts and desires, educate themselves, and steward the natural world. Unfortunately, humans can also use this power to exploit nature and tyrannize other human beings. This potency of will, which on the one hand can connect us to conscious harmony, can also lead us in the direction of separation from that same harmony.

I have been speaking of presence as a human attribute, with the understanding that it is the presence of Absolute Being reflected through the human being.[...]. Because we find it extending beyond the boundaries of what we thought was ourselves, we are freed from separation, from duality. We can then speak of being in this presence.

