Four interviews about the true self Part 1: Johannes Kiersch (Anthroposophist, Germany)

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The terms “I” and “self” do not have unequivocal definitions; to a philosopher they mean something else than e.g. to a psychologist. Furthermore, everybody has their
own idea as to what these terms mean, born from the person’s respective self-perception.

To shed some light on the matter LOGON has asked four people about the “true self” who follow different spiritual paths: Johannes Kiersch (Anthroposophist), Abbot Muhô (Zen master), Peter Hüseyin Cunz (Sheik of the Mevlevi order) and Peter Herrle (Rosicrucian in the Golden Rosycross). The questions touch on the secret of these individuals’ respective existence. Unsurprisingly, the answers have a lot to do with their paths and experiences along the road. Reading the answers, there remains room for intuition – which is necessary because, eventually, this is about things that transcend language. The answers differ from each other and yet (or rather, therefore) complement each other. The one that we truly are just seems to be so comprehensive (and yet so incomprehensible) that a multi-perspective approach is necessary.

LOGON: The spiritual path leads to the true self. What does the true self mean for you?

Kiersch: A distant goal. For a start, I can point out that everything I encounter in life comes from my hidden „other self“, felicitous coincidences which help me along, as well as strokes of destiny from which I can learn. (For details q.v. Steiner: *The Threshold to the Spiritual World* (1913), Complete Works No.17). Behind or beyond this, I sense a higher „true self“, whose reality can be experienced but not described in words.

Who is man before the true self is realized?

A provisional entity. A seminal point. The only being in the world, however, which can say „I“ to itself. This has been provided for by higher authorities, who in the course of long periods of time have created various natural realms.: stones, plants, animals. Man unites these realms within himself and organizes them anew. In a gradated set of emergences (q.v. J.Greve & A.Schnabel: *Emergenz. Zur Analyse und Erklärung komplexer Strukturen*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp 2017 – Emergence. On the Analysis and Explanation of Complex Structures), he may be seen as the world’s most complicated being to date. And, by contrast to his forebears, he is no longer governed from without but is in a position to take his further development into his own hands. He is thereby enabled to act responsibly for other human beings, other forms of life and for the Earth as a whole.
Who is one afterwards? Is it a matter of awakening or of a transformation of being, or...?

Of a sort of awakening. Becoming conscious of circumstances thus far concealed.

Can one say something about who actually treads the path?

I myself. Not somebody else, who takes responsibility for my progress as a higher instance, as did the gods of ancient cultures. In so doing, of course, I constantly become a different person. The process objectifies itself to the degree that I am capable of recognizing initially hidden spiritual aspects in the world and absorbing them. The Gospel of John hints at this with the words: „He must grow but I must diminish“ (John 3, 30).

How do you rate the importance of the realization of the self for daily life? And for mankind in general?

In the process, I fairly quickly learn to grasp that the greater portion of my activities is determined by habit, convention and routine. It brings joy to discover the little, which I myself accomplish. This little helps the whole of humanity onward.

Thank you, Mr. Kiersch, for this interview.

Johannes Kiersch

Born in 1935, Johannes Kiersch studied English philology, educational sciences and history in Berlin and Tübingen, Germany. Teaching in Frankfurt and Bochum according to Waldorf principles, he co-founded the Institute of Waldorf Educational Sciences in Witten-Annen, Germany, from 1973. Professor for Waldorf educational sciences and author on the esotericism of Anthroposophy.