Four interviews about the true self
Part 4: Peter Herrle (Rosicrucian, Germany)

“The true self is the unfathomable identity of man. For me it is the source of inspiration.”

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

Herrle: The true self lies hidden in the depths of each and every person. In contrast to the metamorphoses past and present experienced in our biography, it is the unfathomable identity of man. It is unfortunately unknown to many, as it is
inaccessible to the rational mind and encumbered by false identities constructed in the course of our lives. We must search for and explore it. For me it is a source of inspiration.

**Who is man before the true self is realized?**

Over thirty years ago, Derek Parfit[1] shocked the world with the injunction that one should drop the belief in a fixed human identity. In fact, one can regard identity as a bundle of reflexes, cultural agreements and hereditary factors lacking in stable identity. Nonetheless, the promise for humanity lies precisely in this construction: going beyond oneself, recognizing oneself as part of the cosmos and the Earth and thereby realizing one’s true self and identity as man.

**Who is one afterwards? Is it a matter of awakening or of a transformation of being, or...?**

It is a matter of transformation of being. Man is constantly changing. A seventy year-old is not the same as he or she was at ten, twenty or forty years of age. This is normal. The question, however, is whether and to what extent a particular type of transformation asserts itself, which I would like to term the coming of consciousness of the true self. The spirit expresses itself in this self. My life thereby becomes different, including my relationship to nature and to other human beings. This is true transformation of being.

**Can one say something about who actually treads the path?**

The true self does not exist for itself but for realization, for others, one might say for its „revelation“. The abstract requires something concrete in which it can express itself and be experienced. Its path leads to the concrete, to „realization“. This is only possible, however, when man makes space for it in one’s life, when - as expressed in the Tao Teh King - a vessel for it exists. This space must be created and nurtured, because it is constantly besieged by all sorts of goals, fears and expectations. Creating this space is the mission and path of mortal man.

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

All great religions and countless spiritual teachers - each at their own time and in their own language - have alluded to this inward path, which simultaneously leads outward. Religion as a concept projecting life fulfilment to an unattainable heaven or the remote future simply nourishes fantasy. It was and always is a
matter of connection with daily life. If it is true that alteration of being is ultimately the goal of life, then everyday life is not just the crucial test for inner growth but also the perceptible manifestation of a life out of the true self.

Thank you, Mr. Herrle, for this interview.

**Peter Herrle**

Born in 1947, Prof. Dr. Peter Herrle taught international urbanistics and architecture at the Technische Universität Berlin and Tongji University, Shanghai. Focusing, among other things, on the connections between architecture and cultural identity he counsels international organizations and NGOs, Asia being the centre of his activity. He is a member of the International Spiritual Leadership of the Golden Rosycross.

[1] Derek Antony Parfit (1942-2017) was a British philosopher who specialised in personal identity, rationality and ethics. He is widely considered one of the most important and influential moral philosophers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.