

AN OFFERING TO FREEDOM

Jasper Hermans

All of us, at some point, will face a bit of broken teaware. It is important to see such accidents as opportunities for growth. In that way, challenges help improve our practice. Even so-called "objects" have their destinies, which means they have a death, too.



Steam billows up from a bowl in front of me, a bowl made by the hands of one of our many beloved and talented brothers inside this global Tea community. It was created to offer space for leaves to unfurl—leaves ready to share their magnificence and spread their essence into the water that is poured onto them, elevating our bodies and minds into higher consciousness.

As I look into this bowl, while seated alone in my little Tea room, I'm suddenly brought back to another time and space... My ears remember the sounds of the big murmuring pot above the clay stove, from which a grounding brew of wise and old trees was being extracted. Though, as you might expect, this didn't take place high up in the misty mountains or deep down in an ancient forest valley. Instead, this murmuring pot was making sounds in the midst of the big, bustling city of Amsterdam.

This session was not to be a solo one either. This deeply-rooted brew was waiting to be poured

into many bowls to be shared with young adults from all over the land. They had all gathered for an afternoon of Tea, meditation and a sharing of heart space. Here it was that for the first time I poured Tea into this bowl, lifted her up, placed her down, opened her by a gentle turn and pulled back my hand, to offer her to be shared with one of the many valued guests. A bowl so graciously providing space for the endless depths to be discovered inside of her. A bowl free of any preferences to be full or empty, and open to be held by everyone.

Right there in the reflection of the Tea, I could see this circle of beautiful young people, in the midst of their learning and growing, in the midst of their blooming and awakening. This momentary reflection highlighted that we have but one chance to meet, as the very next moment this bowl will be picked up, and the Tea will flow out into all directions to merge with our beings. How precious this opportunity to offer space for everyone to

arrive and return home to their true nature! How precious this opportunity to meet everyone and everything, in this time and space!

And this time and space is where I return, seated alone in my little Tea room, and yet sharing this bowl of Tea with all. Feeling so proud to be part of this beautiful, living tradition: where Nature is being recognized by Nature, again and again, in the countless bowls being shared all over the world; where so many gorgeous souls are so dedicated to learning, growing, sharing and serving with all their hearts. I'm fortunate to have been a witness to so many eyes being brightened by the bowls shared throughout our community—a community of heart, spirit, smiles, hugs and a great, great love and connection to the Leaf and all Nature...

I sometimes wonder, who could not bow in gratitude when surrounded by all this beauty? Whose eyes wouldn't be moistened by this abundance of Love, brother and sisterhood? Who hears these cries

from Mother Earth calling out our names, to stop and listen to the weary songs our own hearts sing? Hearts in agony because of separation from where we all come from, from where we will all return to one day, together. I sometimes wish to sing out loud, and let the names of those who wander echo through the forests valleys, shaking around those deeply asleep. And yet, who am I

to play around with the ways of the Dao? Who am I to try to sing louder than Great Nature's voice? My cries just might break the windows and crack some bowls instead... Returning to the empty space inside the kettle might be more useful to me...

And that's exactly when I was reminded, during a momentary lapse of awareness, perhaps with my mind still wandering inside those

bowls I shared in Amsterdam, and I let this oh-so-precious bowl slip out of my hands... The sound of the cracking widened my eyes, and suddenly but kindly reminded me to stay quiet and let Great Nature's voice resound freely when I offer my bowls of Tea...



Scattered into pieces.

*A finger cut,
By the illusion
Of permanence.*

*A bowl lived to serve once,
In a one chance one encounter,
To meet where we all are,
Sipping tea out of a single bowl.*

*The sound of the cracking,
Echoing through time and space,
Reminding us where this single bowl lies hidden.
Bringing us back,
To the space from where She really comes.
Opening our eyes,
To see where She really flows.*

*So that next time,
When the kettle is being lifted up from the coals,
And the water is being poured into the bowls,
We realize that it is not by our hands
That the formless takes form.*