

國  
際  
茶  
亭

# VOICES FROM THE HUT

-Steve Kokker & Timo Einpaul

*It's always great to hear from all of you. Submitting articles is a great way to connect to your global Tea community. Each of you has a voice, and tea experience worth sharing. As we so often express, the beginner's mind is very wise, and a lot of what we have learned about Tea over the years has come from those experiencing it for the first time in their lives. So if you have something to share, we'd love to here from you!*

## Tea Wonder

By Steve Kokker

*Some ponderings following a series of deep tea sessions...*

With each sip of this tea, I feel a sense of awe building. There is a feeling of power and majesty in me, accompanied by some head stuff, some confusion—how indeed can this be? What is this plant, this spirit? No matter how often this kind of experience has been gifted to me, no matter the myriad times I have been blessed to receive this nectar and share in Her knowledge, to be shaken and stirred so very deeply, I still sometimes ques-

tion this Mystery. What is going on? How can this be explained?

The 'little self' wonders why and wherefore while the higher self bathes in... *wonder*.

Wonder. It's among my favorite words (along with magic; mystery; steam; adrift; sensuous; and fluff). The sense of wonder. It's part of what distinguishes us from our other mammalian cousins. What a marvel it truly is that we can gaze for endless minutes, just for the inherent beauty of it, at a landscape, or at a sunset, or at a small Arctic yellow flower growing tenaciously behind a rock in the tundra, or into the bottomless pools of a dear friend's eyes, or at a touching scene of human interaction, at lovers cuddling on a park bench... These

things arouse in us a sense of awe, amazement and hypnotized wonder (I will use this word often here, be warned).

Wonder is something that many thinkers, philosophers and scientists have written about. It seems to be the inspirational source of our drive to step forward. Astronaut Neil Armstrong once said, and he should know about these things, "Mystery creates wonder, and wonder is the basis of man's desire to understand."

Going back much further, as do most all quotations on just about any subject, Aristotle said, quite famously, that "Philosophy begins with wonder" (actually the quote is also ascribed to his teacher Plato, and to Plato's teacher Socrates—great minds think alike). Less



famously, Aristotle expounded, “Wonder implies the desire to learn”. It is what fuels any quest.

More recently, Alan Watts had this to say about the impossibility of intellectualizing and quantifying one’s innate curiosity about the ways things are: “I don’t know what question to ask when I wonder about the universe. It isn’t a question that I’m wondering about, it’s a feeling that I have... Because I cannot formulate the question that is my wonder. The moment my mouth opens to talk about it, I suddenly find I’m talking nonsense. But that should not prevent wonder from being the foundation of philosophy.”

Wonder and a sense of mystery do seem to be at the root of a desire to learn; in a sense it can be said to

be the motivation to step forward into any endeavor—why we ‘risk’ doing anything at all. It’s a kind of semi-conscious impulse towards a feeling of discovery, as if some part of us yearns for and seeks it. It is fulfilling, and feels fun!

Aristotle, being an empiricist, also knew that knowledge is gained mainly through experience, and that experience for us humans, comes through our senses. None of us really are able to understand something unless we directly experience it ourselves (it’s what makes full understanding between two people a rather distant dream, unless empathy is continually encouraged). We are sensual beings, to a very large degree guided and limited by our physical senses.

Meditative tea drinking is both a sensual and deeply spiritual activity, and as such connects both realms seamlessly. This to me is a wonder, the essential Mystery of Tea. To see a guest’s entire physical frame change over the course of a tea session, to bear witness to a human soul-softening/opening, is to me something so beautiful. On a number of occasions I have been blessed to be able to look into the soulful eyes of someone after a tea session, eyes which just hours before were clouded by thought, confusion, noise, etc. The thanks expressed in this state often come out gorgeously awkward, as previously untapped emotions or states of being are translated into words. This is something Tea,