

# ***A Journey to the Heart***

## ***-An Invitation Letter-***

Individual Research Project  
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## **Abstract**

I explored the heart for my individual study project. The path to the heart is a journey to be our authentic selves, find true beings of others, encounter the world in its truth, and come together as a whole at the end. The heart consciousness unveils the beautiful reality to us that we all are distinct, irreplaceable individual beings that are the whole.

## **Introduction / Intention of the Project**

When I started working on the project with the topic of the heart, it was not clear to me where it would take me. I was completely at a loss feeling detached from myself and the world. Everything including my own being was uncertain. I could not feel my thoughts, emotions or desires as my own and did not feel alive. The world was looking superficial or almost unreal to me. I was struggling to be certain of my being and have trust that the world around me is real. Through the conversation with my friend in the course, I found a question dwelling deep in myself, that was “how do we know that we know?” And the answer was the heart. “Knowing” in its true sense comes only through the heart. Knowing from the heart was the only way for me to be certain and have trust. Working on the project with the heart was the very initial step I could take to go on a journey to find my authentic ‘I’ and meet the world in its truth.

I became more conscious of my strong intention behind the project only in the beginning of June. Andrea de la Cruz, the coordinator of the studies, asked me what the intention of my project was, and I realized that it was about authenticity and connection. It came strongly to me that “I want to be me, I want you to be you, and I want us to be connected.”

## **Method / Process**

As a first step, I educated myself about the heart based on the existing research by HeartMath - leading organizations in the study of the science of the heart. With their shared mission to awaken the heart of humanity, they aim to help people connect with their hearts. I believe that the heart is not merely a physical pump nor a representation of feelings. HeartMath organizations recognize the significance of the heart and present it to the world through their scientific research. What was most fascinating for me from their research was the ‘psychophysiological coherence (heart coherence)’. The coherent state of the heart is described as the ‘physiological coherence’ in which bodily rhythmic systems are stable and harmoniously ordered. This state is measured by Heart Rate Variability (HRV), which is the variation of interval time between each heartbeat. Emotional state is also reflected on the heart rhythm. Coherent HRV correlates with positive emotional states. The heart coherence (psychophysiological coherence) is the state in which our physical, mental, and emotional states are in balanced alignment and thus harmoniously enhanced (McCraty, 2015). It seemed to me that the heart is the heart of everything.

In March, I slowly shifted from the science of the heart to looking at books and lectures from Rudolf Steiner. I must say, however, I could not go very deep into the study of the heart in anthroposophy. I started studying anthroposophy for the first time when I joined this foundation course. I had never read any book or lecture from Steiner before. Thus, I was mostly working on understanding the basic ideas in anthroposophy which I need before I can understand the heart in anthroposophy. For example, to understand the formation of the astral heart, an understanding of the astral is first required. Although my process was slow, I did enjoy finding the heart in Steiner's texts. Rather than intensively looking at Steiner's statements about the heart, I studied anthroposophy more in general and incorporated it to my understanding of the heart. The books we studied, *Theosophy*, *The Philosophy of Freedom* and *The Threshold to the Spiritual World*, and the conversations in the class occupy a large part of the resources for my project.

My focus was on developing an understanding of my own, not only understanding what Steiner said. For this reason, and also because of my limited knowledge of anthroposophy, ideas presented in my writing could be very different from the ones of Steiner, even though I use the same terms or concepts. It was a process of taking in the knowledge from anthroposophy and processing it in my own way to let it become a part of myself. In the beginning, I thought it would be a study of the heart from two distinct perspectives, the science of the heart and anthroposophy, that complement each other. Now I also have an impression that HeartMath and anthroposophy understand the heart in the same way but describe it in different languages. I see the limitations of each language, but I did not see any contradictions in what they present about the heart. Having different approaches had a positive impact on developing an idea of what the heart is for me.

Learning through living experiences was another pillar of my project. I tried to connect to my own heart and live with it. There are practical exercises that HeartMath proposes, and the six subsidiary exercises and meditation from anthroposophy could have been great tools. However, I mostly tried in my own way. My main exercise was to simply bring focus to my heart. Being aware of the heart in daily lives was already powerful enough but I also put it into a form of exercise: I close my eyes, place my hands on my heart and feel the heart. Breathing slowly and deeply was effective to support the process. I often did this exercise in the morning soon after waking up, while I still have some sensitivity that I usually do not maintain during the day in our sensory reality. Also, I did it on occasions in which I wanted to be with my heart, such as before I meet someone to have a conversation. In addition, I found that avoiding white sugar and reducing screen time by taking a break from social media significantly helpful. In a way, anything that increases psychophysiological coherence is a way to be connected to the heart. Before I can practice more advanced exercises, I needed to start from preparing the ground for it. Therefore, I started with a simple exercise to focus on the heart and cultivating a healthy lifestyle that prepares the ground.

I also found that experiencing the heart qualities, such as love, gratitude, awe, openness, courage, or warmth, was one of the most effective ways to connect to the heart. Finding warmth (paying attention to everything that is related to warmth) was the advice

from my teacher/mentor, Bodo von Plato. Finding warmth brought warm feelings that made me aware of the heart.

### **Challenges / Exploring the Language of the Heart**

I found it challenging to balance intellectual study and leaning through living experiences to understand the heart. Intellectual study can go beyond experience and bring ideas, but I truly understand them through experience, meaning that they are both equally important. However, as I feel stressed and rushed to complete the project, I went overly to the direction of intellectual study. I felt that I should be reading more and understanding more about the heart in anthroposophy. However, although I went through many readings, the contents were not living in me as I was not experiencing them. In mid-May, I started to feel like my topic is dying. The being of my project was getting weaker. It was a struggle that the more effort I make (in the direction of intellectual study), the weaker the being became. Pushing myself harder through the stress was almost the only way I knew to achieve my goals. However, the heart did not come alive in excessive stress and anxiety. In early June, I came to the point I could not go further, I had to go back to my heart that I left behind and let the being of my project be alive again. I stopped reading. Instead, I went for a long walk, talked to the people, took a moment to embrace my life, communicated with myself through free writing, or participated in artistic performances. Feelings of love, appreciation, excitement, joy, a sense of beauty, and so forth, slowly came back, through which the heart came back to me.

I feel to understand the heart, the language we usually use that is focused on the words is not enough. Language is also present in love, imagination, poems, beauty, warmth, stories, music, art, and more. My intention for the written work of my project as well as for the presentation was to communicate through the language of the heart. For this reason, instead of writing a formal essay, I wrote a letter.

# *Invitation Letter*

Dear beautiful people,

Thank you for being here.

This is my invitation to you to join me on the journey to the heart.

Imagine a little being who is in the physical form of a little boy.

It is a beautiful day with clear skies and sunshine, at the station, just like the Dornach Bahnhof.

There is a train just coming in, and stepping out of the train is the little boy.

He stepped out of the train, looked around, and started to look for something.

“Where is it?”, he asked.

“Where is what?”, people looked at him. “What are you looking for?”, they asked.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“But I need it.”

He kept asking people, but no one had the answer.

The boy walked towards the old man standing by the side of the platform.

“I am looking for.” The boy said to him.

“What are you looking for, my friend?” The old man gave him a gentle look.

“I don’t know,” the boy said.

“Yes, you do know,” the old man replied.

The boy thought for a while. Then he said,

“I am looking for me.” After a pause, he looked up to the old man and continued,

“I am looking for you.” The old man bent down towards the little boy.

“I am looking for us.” The boy said.

The man looked into his eyes and said;

“Look for the heart.”

The little boy started his journey.

Just like him, I was looking for myself, others, and wholeness. I want to be me. I want you to be you. And I want us to be connected. This is the reason that pushed me to go on a journey to look for the heart.

What is the heart for you? The heart for me is what allows us to be our authentic selves and be together. I find myself in my heart. And I connect to others and the whole world through my heart.

Now I am inviting you to join me. It will be a beautiful journey. If you have already walked the path and feel like there is no need to go all the way through again, that is totally fine. Or if you would like to go your own way, you are welcome to do so. But I would still be happy if you could meet me or wait for me at the end, where the journey completes only with your presence.

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## **The Threshold and the Guardians**

The path to the heart is a path to the threshold of the spiritual world. Connecting to the heart means becoming who we truly are and learning to be together with others, which is about coming close to the threshold and crossing it.

Have you ever come to the threshold? Where did you find it?

I see the threshold in between you and me.

The threshold appears wherever I meet the otherness, and the moment I become one with them I will cross the threshold. It is the threshold between the physical sensory world and the spiritual suprasensory world. In the physical world, everything is separated, whereas in the spiritual world, everything is connected. You can be you and nothing else in the sensory sphere, but you are one with others in the spiritual realm. These polarities, separation and connection, meet at the threshold. You rise above the threshold when you become a separate individual while being a united whole.

The path to the heart is also a path of consciousness. Everything already exists together. We are in the spiritual realm at the same time we are in the physical world. We are already one with others while we are distinctive from each other. However, we are not conscious of it. It is because of our human constitution that things appear separately (Steiner, 1894/2011). By connecting to the heart, you gain awareness and become more conscious of the higher reality where things are

no longer separated. The threshold is there between your sensory consciousness and suprasensory consciousness which is aware of the wholeness.

The guardians of the threshold are making sure that you come to the threshold when you learn to be you and cross it when you learn to be together with others. The first guardian standing in front of the threshold tells you to strengthen your 'I'. He takes you back to the sensory world if you have not gained the strong self-consciousness which is only possible to acquire in the sensory world. The second guardian waiting right behind the threshold tells you to bring others. He never opens the door to the spiritual world if you come alone.

So, on our journey to the heart, we are also walking the path to the threshold.  
The heart is where you find the threshold and meet the guardians.



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### Strengthening the 'I' / Finding the 'I'

The journey starts with the development of the 'I'. Having a strong self-consciousness is essential before we connect with others. Being together with others is not about merging into others by completely vanishing yourself. It is about having your 'I' and yet remaining connected. You can imagine two rings that are linked one in the other, like a chain. They are completely separate but



connected. You are not just hanging on or being swung around by the other ring. Another example would be blue and yellow coming together and transforming into green, in which qualities of blue and yellow still exist. You are not turning yourself to the other's colour by making yourself colourless.

I want to be with you, but before that, I want you to be you. If you are fading away or trying to be someone else, I will be in a trouble to find you.

The little boy is looking for 'you,' not anyone else.

Who are you? The first guardian is asking us. If we cannot answer, the guardian does not let us go further.

Who are we? What is the 'I' that the guardian is asking us to strengthen? There is a beautiful description of the human 'I' by Rudolf Steiner in his book, *Theosophy*. "For the I receives its nature and significance from that with which it is bound up" (1904/2011). We can only understand the human 'I' in its relation to what it is related to. The 'I' comes up when what is outside gives a form to it. I have an image that the 'I' is like a circle that appears when we draw the lines around. There is nothing there in the middle, but there is something, that is the 'I'.

It means that we would come to know our 'I' by understanding the interactions between the 'I' and the surrounding world. These interactions are what give form to the 'I', making it visible to our eyes.

Thinking, feeling and willing are the tools for the 'I' to interact with the external world. They are not the 'I' but the lines around it. The 'I' is the being that is using these tools. Through feeling, we receive the world into us. With the will, we bring ourselves into the world. Thinking is a bridge going over the threshold. Because of our thinking capacity, we can relate to or separate ourselves from the rest of the world. Thinking creates separation by creating a subject and object, but it is universal in its nature (Steiner, 1894/2011). Through thinking, we become conscious of ourselves, the world around us, and the interactions in between. I see these three fundamental soul capacities as the translators of my 'I' to my normal sensory consciousness.

Thus, by understanding your thinking, feeling and willing, you will come to know yourself. Your self-consciousness grows as you get to know yourself, and your 'I' is strengthened. Gaining self-knowledge is a step to become an authentic self.



Nature of the 'I' and 'I'- consciousness (The 'I' comes up in its relation to what it is related to. By understanding the interactions between the 'I' and the external world through thinking, feeling and willing, your self-consciousness grows.)

If we asked Steiner for his advice on how to know ourselves, he may have proposed the six subsidiary exercises. In my understanding, they are practical tools designed for you to work closely with your thinking, feeling, and willing, so that you can eventually become their master. Steiner would say, however, that we all have to find our individual ways in the end. For me, the best way is traveling. I also learn about myself through talking with people or engaging in artistic activities. You are also totally free to work in your own way!

It is a beautiful process to explore every spectrum of your thinking, feeling, and willing. We usually do not recognize all the aspects of our thoughts, feelings or will in their true form. Some of them are more deeply rooted in the external world and affected by your environment to a great extent. For instance, in a culture in which menstruation is considered impure, you might also think that it is dirty and fail to see it as a beautiful function of the human body. You could also trick yourself to hide or suppress some of your thoughts, emotions or desires. When you suppress your anger, frustration or anxiety, you would never have a chance to see what is behind them. As you practice, you will have a clearer vision of your thinking, feeling, and willing and become able to listen to what they are telling you about yourself. Slowly you become free of these fundamental soul activities of your own and gain a mastery of them instead.

We would also recognize that thinking, feeling, and willing are generated not only in response to the impulses coming from the outer world but that they can originate in ourselves. When we become free of our thinking, feeling, and willing that are stimulated by the external world, and become free in creating the ones originating in ourselves, we have a ground for the experience of freedom. The human 'I' is in our free activities of thinking, feeling, and willing.

You can freely move or draw the lines and create a shape that you like in the middle. I would love to make it a heart shape! What would yours be like?

That which appears is our 'I', our authentic self. I do believe it dwells in our hearts.



We become authentic only when we are free. Or vice versa, we are free when we become our authentic selves. Freedom for me is to be able to follow my most authentic being, the 'I'. In freedom, I am not controlled or dragged around by myself but I am able to follow myself. To be free or to be authentic, I have to be able to listen to the voice of my authentic 'I', which comes from the heart. The heart is a channel through which I can listen to my 'I'. It becomes especially challenging when the voice from the heart contradicts the voice mainly coming from my sensory consciousness, such as fear, insecurities, or desires rooted in the sensory world. However, if I really do know myself, meaning that the voice from my heart is clear as if someone is directly talking to my ear, I have the courage and strength to follow the voice. Rather, it becomes like a command, and I almost have no other choice but to follow. Strange enough, I experience freedom when there is no other choice. But being able to make that 'the only choice' brings an experience of freedom. I will quote Steiner here as I found it describing my experience of freedom. "A person is free in so far as he is able to obey himself in every moment of his life" (1894/2011). Freedom is a fundamental human condition. Steiner says that "we are human beings in the true sense only in so far as we are free" (1904/2011).

Connecting to the heart is a way to be authentic, to be free, to be a human being. There in your heart, you meet your 'I'.

I feel that life in this physical world is a gift for us to meet our true 'I'. Freedom is only possible in the physical world where things exist separately. You may have your soul capacities, thinking, feeling, and willing in the spiritual world, but they are no longer free. The 'I'-consciousness arises in the sensory world where there is separation and a possibility for freedom. The guardian takes you back to the sensory world as it is the best and probably the only place your 'I' can truly

become the 'I'. Let the heart be your safeguard. With the heart, you can safely immerse yourself in the sensory world and explore your soul qualities there to become 'you'.

Say "I am 'I'" to the guardian.

The guardian opens the gateway to the threshold as you have strengthened your 'I'-feeling sufficiently.

Now the little boy must have found himself. You can imagine that he is jumping in joy and says, "I found me!" with a big happy smile on his face.

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### **Letting go of the 'I' - Finding 'you'**

What is next? We have not yet come to the destination of our journey. The little boy said, "I am looking for me. I am looking for you. I am looking for us." He has found himself, but now he is looking for the old man, as he said "I am looking for you" to him.

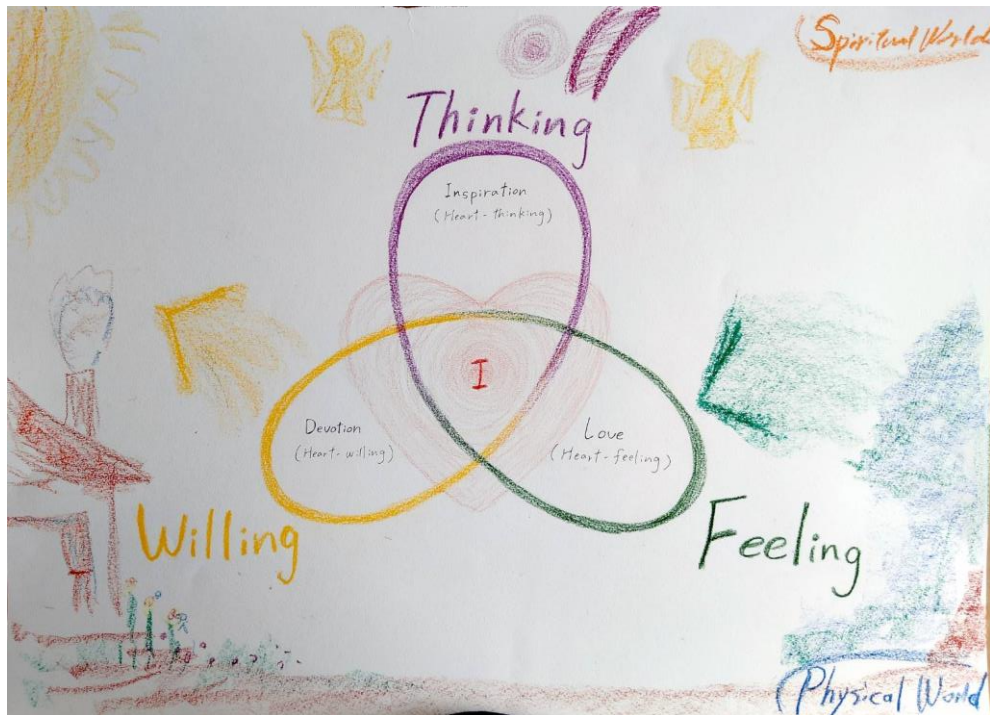
As soon as the first guardian opens the door of the threshold for us, we meet another guardian who was waiting for us just behind the door.

He asks, "Where are the others?"

If you came by yourself, he would say "Bring the others with you," then closes the door again.

How can we come together with others? I would say we need to learn to use our tools, thinking, feeling, and willing, in such a way that we can find others and invite them to come with us. My answer is the heart. These soul capacities are brought together in the heart. The heart serves as a coordinator for them to come together and function harmoniously. By Strengthening the connection of each quality to the heart, we will acquire the capacities to meet others and walk together to the threshold.

Thinking, feeling, and willing, each of these has different layers. By bringing the heart into these soul qualities, they are elevated to their higher forms. Thinking builds a bridge to the spiritual. If you place your heart as the foundation stone of the bridge, you will acquire the capacity of heart-thinking through which you can bring the spiritual contents into your consciousness. That is inspiration. Through feeling, you receive the world into you. When you receive it in your heart, it becomes a heart-feeling, love. Through willing, you bring yourself into the world. When you bring something in your heart into the world, you are performing heart-willing, which we call devotion.



Devotion and love are the qualities of the heart. They are transformative qualities from the 'I' to the other, and from the other to the 'I'. Devotion is an experience of oneself in the other and love is an experience of the other in oneself (Steiner, 1918/1999). In devotion, you surrender yourself and strive towards the object of devotion and live in it. In love, you withdraw from yourself to create the space for others to come and live in. Both are the qualities to go over the threshold to be united with other beings or processes, but they are performed only when we have learned the qualities of self-surrender or self-withdrawal.

Muting self is a condition for finding the truth (Steiner, 1904/2011). Steiner says that the truth should be the object of devotion. I assume that love arises in our striving to have a true understanding of the object.

Your personal thinking, feeling, and willing become a filter that blocks you to see the truth. For instance, when we read a book, we almost never understand the text purely. It is your interaction with the text. Your ways of being is a decisive factor in what and how you perceive and understand the contents. Therefore, for the truth, you are required to let go of yourself that you have strived to strengthen. You do so through devotion and love. By means of devotion and love, together with the faculty of heart-thinking, the heart turns into an organ for perception.

The next step after strengthening the 'I' is to let go of your consciousness of self. By doing so with the perception of the heart, you will meet others in truth.

Remember that letting go of your self-consciousness does not mean losing yourself. It means your consciousness completely goes out of yourself into what is around you. But those external existences in which your consciousness goes in are what makes you exist, just like the lines make a circle come forth. Your self-consciousness does vanish, but 'you' are fully there. So, feel safe. Trust that you will not lose yourself. By completely giving up yourself to others, you will be let live by them.



The little boy is jumping again in joy. He has found the true being of the old man through love and devotion. He runs to the old man and says, 'I found you!' You see them holding hands walking further up the hill to find the heart. The little boy is almost there to find 'us' which is the last thing he is looking for.

We are now coming back to the threshold. This time we come together with others.

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### **Being together - Finding 'us'**

We are all at the threshold. The first guardian opens the door for us if we all have a strong 'I'. The second guardian makes sure that we have acquired devotion, love, and inspiration, and let us go. From now on, for the last part of the journey, you yourself are responsible. The guardians have fulfilled their duties. They say, "You can go by yourself now, we trust you."

We have found the 'I' and met the true being of others. The last step is to become 'us'. This is where we each need to bring our two paradoxical capacities, "having a strong 'I'" and "letting go of the 'I'", together.

The strong 'I'- feeling becomes a firm basis for love and devotion. If you devote yourself without having a strong sense of self, your 'I' is immediately faced with the danger of self-loss (Steiner, 1909). Your 'I' needs to be present as it is an experience of 'yourself' in the other. Love also requires a strong presence of the 'I' as it is an act of participation. It is different from indifference, 'you' must be there and be responsible for the consequence it brings. You can effortlessly love when you benefit from it. However, love referred to here is the love for the sake of itself or its object. You love even though it could be painful to yourself. When you acquire the qualities of devotion and love with your strong 'I'- consciousness, you have acquired the capacity to become one with others.

The last question is how to raise the consciousness. Although you have learned to place your consciousness either in or out of yourself, there is no consciousness for both in and out. That is the last thing you need, your consciousness that can hold the true reality. Bringing two opposite capacities, having the 'I' and letting go of the 'I', means bringing your 'I'- consciousness and your consciousness of others together.

Consciousness is where your observation and thinking meet (Steiner, 1894/2011). I thought it could happen that your consciousness rises above the threshold as your observation is raised to its pure form and thinking to its highest form. Your observation becomes pure by employing devotion and love as those are the qualities to acquire truth. It is the perception of the heart. When thinking is raised from inspiration to its highest form, intuition, it is no longer the thinking with the heart, but becomes the thinking of the heart. The heart is developed into an organ of thinking. When the heart becomes an organ for perception and thinking, your pure observation and highest form of thinking meet in the heart. This is the moment your consciousness transcends. I name it heart-consciousness.



The heart has become a conscious organ for perception and thinking.

With the heart consciousness, your 'I' will be expanded to encompass others and the world as your 'I'. The heart consciousness unveils the beautiful reality in which we all are distinct, irreplaceable individual beings that are the whole.

Look into your heart. There you see the whole universe. It is you.

The little boy and the old man have now arrived at the top of the hill. And suddenly a house, exactly like the Haus Schuurman, appeared in front of them. White walls were shining reflecting the morning sun.

The moment he found the house, the little boy knew he has found his house. The house of his 'I'.

'I found my house!'

He ran up the steps and ran up to the house.

There, on the side of the door, it says, "Heart Haus".

The little boy waited for the old man to come up, then he took his hand and together they entered the house.

Inside, it was full of light and warmth. The wind coming in was moving the curtains, making the house breathe and create a beautiful rhythm.

The boy and the old man stood in the middle of the room and shared a moment of silence.

At that moment, the boy knew that he knew.

He looked up to the old man and said,

"I found us."

The old man smiled at him and said,

"Yes, you did, my little friend. And look, this is your heart."

The heart is a House of the 'I'.

The heart is where I meet you and become us.

This is the end of our journey.

Thank you for joining me on this journey to the heart.

The heart is hosting us all at this very moment to come together in harmony.



## Afterword

I remember, in our first session with Andrea about the individual study project, she said to us, "Take it as a gift to yourself." It stayed with me, and now I can say that working on the project was a real gift. It was a joy to explore the questions and the theme that come from the depth of my heart with the support from the faculty members and my colleagues. It was also a joy to share it with others. I received so much through the presentation.

Through the project, I was able to reconfirm that I am in the phase of strengthening the 'I', and that it is the right path. Connectedness has long been my core passion, but it requires a strong 'I'. After the presentation, there was a moment that I realized becoming an 'I' is not a process that I have to go through alone, it is a process that can only happen with the presence of others. It brought me a warm feeling. The individual project was an individual striving, but others were always there. I see indescribable beauty in the reality that we can see with the heart consciousness. I am I but I am with others.

Leading humanity to the heart consciousness together with others would be my aspiration for the future. I would like to see every single being shine in its own unique way. And I would like to bring the whole world to become one. Through the project, I realized that the heart was the right path. Letting the individuals be their authentic beings and hosting all to come together in harmony was the quality of the heart. In the beginning, it was rather an intuitive decision to work on the topic of the heart. I do believe that my heart was guiding me. Now I am ready to go into the world and continue working with the heart. It is a journey from the heart, to the heart, and always with the heart.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone who has been there on my path. Your presence is what makes my journey beautiful.

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