

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF PADDLING

I was born in Helsinki and have lived my whole life by the Baltic Sea – or, to be more accurate, by the Gulf of Finland. This is why my identity contains a powerful feeling of the sea's proximity.

Ever since childhood, I have swum, rowed, paddled, and traveled the Baltic Sea. Canoeing was my hobby for about twenty years, and during that time I made several trips around the Åland islands and along the coast of Finland. I have been beside a sea eagle, fought a swan, collided with swarm of eiders and fallen over in a storm. I have encountered all that it is possible to encounter as a paddler. I shall tell you one of the stories.

One day at the end of May I took off from Porkkalanniemi and paddled first to an outer islet and then by way of the open sea to Helsinki. On the islet, I went swimming, as the day was gorgeous, despite the water being freezing cold. After that I steered kayak's bow toward Helsinki. After paddling for some time soon I noticed a white wall fast approaching from the south. A very dense sea fog had risen abruptly, and after a few minutes I was paddling in the middle of a white cloud with a twenty meters visibility, I was not very concerned, because I always wore compass on my wrist and I knew the approximate direction. I became very concerned when suddenly around me I heard deep booming sound. A Ship! But where it was coming from? The booming sound was growing stronger all the time. I tried to fathom the direction of the sound, but it was impossible. The sound was everywhere. I sat motionless in the kayak and waited. When the sound was at its peak, suddenly an enormous dark mountain appeared on the right. A huge ferry glided past me. I quickly turned the kayak in the right position to face the waves roused by the ship. After the ship was gone, I noticed that instead of freezing I was sweating profusely – and all I needed to do was to sit in the kayak and do nothing.

Markku Hakuri

HOUSE OF MOMENTS

Seize the moment — life is the best time a human being has.

An unbeatable combination coined by two philosophers of life, Horace and Matti Nykänen.

I love the moment. Its absoluteness. Its transience and its concreteness. The moment is the time when all sensory perceptions are real and observable. A moment is an insight and an understanding of the meaningfulness — or meaninglessness — of existence. Everything is contained within a moment. It is the culmination point of time, where the past and the future meet. It is the event horizon of time, from which there is no return to the past and no access to the future.

For more than thirty years, my workspace was an old shop warehouse. A magpie's nest heated by a wood-burning stove. In winter, after five hours of heating, I could barely raise the temperature to ten degrees Celsius. I worked in an ice-fishing overall, market vendor's gloves on my hands and a beanie on my head. I got up at six in the morning to heat the shed. Wood was consumed. Looking back now, it was a nostalgic time, but still — the difficulty of working there was a constant source of complaints. Often my workday ended after midnight, tired and frustrated. Why did I choose such a path?

One winter night, after a long and exhausting workday, I turned off the lights in the workspace and stepped out into the freezing night. When I glanced up at the sky, the Milky Way was glowing there. I stopped to stare at the star-filled sky — unimaginable distances, the universe. In that moment, everything was self-evident and clear. This was how everything was meant to be. A deep sense of certainty, happiness, and lightness lasted only a moment, but it contained everything: understanding and insight into the world and existence.

THE POND IS MIXED UP

– or a Sweaty Afternoon

Science keeps the waters of the pond in order. Art mixes them up.

The Pond Is Mixed Up is based on my experiences as an active orienteering enthusiast. If the pond is given a metaphorical meaning, it may also represent inner life — the life inside one's head. So which pond is mixed up?

It was a summer day, a sweaty afternoon (*Sidney Lumet: Dog Day Afternoon*). I decided to orienteer from one pond to another so that I could cool off in the water from time to time. I found a remote little pond, a kettle hole filled with groundwater. Surrounded by earthen embankments and dense forest, the water of the pond was crystal clear. In complete stillness, the surface of the water could not be distinguished. The sky was reflected in the pond, and the earthly horizon disappeared from my mind. As I stared into the pond, I was floating freely in space, beyond the walls of the surrounding reality. The tiny creatures of the pond wandered through emptiness. My own body felt immaterial. From the reflection in the pond, an unknown person was looking back at me. I forced myself into the water, and everything shattered. The movement of the water broke the stillness of the pond's surface and stirred muddy vortices from the bottom. In an instant, in place of enchantment, there was an ordinary pond whose water was mixed up.

I will not begin to unravel the pond's metaphors.

Still, one must ask —

How can the universe be boundless yet finite?

Are calmness and silence siblings?

What is life, told in a single sentence?

Is it possible to be perfectly happy?

What is the morality of the market?

What is the true difference between speech and silence?

What kind of time is eternity?

Is the universe one person's life?

Why is light different for everyone?

Is still water always clear?