

Notes

1. M. Martella, *Tornare al giardino*, Milan 2016, pp 14-15
2. R. Barthes, *Centro città, centro vuoto* in *L'impero dei segni*, It. transl. Marco Vallora, Einaudi, Turin, 1984
3. M. Mallora, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25
4. Assagioli's Archives, Florence: Archivio Studio 2810
5. According to Plutarch, the Pythagoreans believed that the square synthesized in the power of Rhea (mother of the gods) the modifications of the four elements symbolized by Aphrodite (generating water), Hestia (fire), Demeter (earth) and Hera (air). In close analogy also with the respective elementary principles (wet, dry cold and hot) which, according to the ancients, were the basis of all the manifestations of terrestrial life. The ages of the world, the human life, the seasons and the lunar months are marked by the number four.
6. The well, in the Gothic churches, was a sacred element: the water that was drawn from it was considered of great healing virtues and was used in medicinal preparations. It refers to the divine maternity of Mary, she who gave the world the source of living water, that is Jesus (Jn 7: 37-38)
7. F. Brunelli, Dalla periferia al centro (from IV Lesson – 1976) in “Psychosynthesis” n.12, October 2009, pp. 34-38
8. Assagioli's Archives, Florence: Archivio Studio 11752

THE MAGICAL PROCESS OF NUTRITION

Translation by Donatella Randazzo

We are at the end of the three year-cycle of *Food between earth and sky*, the column that has now completed its life, leaving space for other initiatives. At the end of a cycle it is good practice to make a brief summary, contact the starting point and complete the circle by tracing a last arc, but also to proceed further and a little higher up, as in a spiral, to begin a new cycle, investing and relaunching the energies accumulated in the previous cycle.

The purpose that I set when I started this column was to observe the current panorama of food, nutrition and diets, trying to offer some food for thought and stimulation to bring a little more awareness and harmony into the relationship we have with food and eating. I availed myself of some notions of human physiology related to the functioning of the digestive system and to the metabolism, as well as of psychology applied to food, but above all I wanted to experiment if the psychosynthetic praxis, with its infinite wisdom, could also apply to this topic, turning it into an opportunity for self-knowledge, and potential harmonization of our levels.

I realized that maintaining a “balanced” attitude towards food is increasingly difficult nowadays: we continuously talk about eating, diets, recipes, gastronomic contests, chefs, while a hyperactive culinary communication is coupled with the collective desire to photograph dishes for publication on social media or sharing with all the contacts of the many chats that we are often forced to be part of. And the advice (usually unsolicited) on what to eat, when and how much, reaches us from everywhere, accompanied by the spectrum of funerary consequences if we eat the wrong things, while on the contrary, if ensnared by the illusion of an almost unlimited longevity we follow the so-called right recommendations, we are faced with heavy diet regimes. But the opinions on food, which derive from rules that change at the same speed as meteorological conditions, who dictates them?

And even if it was from a reliable source, are we available to become slaves, forcing ourselves to search for incessant updates, to align with the latest news?

If the answer - ahinoi - is yes, let's pause for a moment to take some deep breaths, to reconnect with ourselves, with our body and with the other levels. Let us realize that all this great talk about food is the result of a collective unconscious where the emotional level and its various fears reign supreme, at the expense of a physical level that, despite the promises made by the various diets, continues to fall ill, while the mind is distracted and turned away, often just counting calories or measuring bodily circumferences, loading the psyche with further frustration and a sense of defeat when none of this adds up.

Let us look away from the outside world and bring our attention back to ourselves: we are unique beings, and as such we should appreciate and honor the diversity of our personality; in the food area it very simply means eating what we like, in moderation and contacting our body, to perceive and respect the variety of signals it sends - hunger, satiety, curiosity, pleasure, taste, repulsion, closure, danger - maintaining the awareness of the present, which among other things will allow us not only to savor, appreciate and better digest food, but also to be facilitated in the relationship with others, starting from the pleasure of sharing. This was the meaning of so-called "intuitive" eating, based on the wisdom of the body.

If our relationship with food is not so harmonious, let us ask ourselves why, always keeping in mind that it can represent a metaphor of the relationship we have with life, and therefore a precious indication of who we are and how we live.

This relationship is also the mirror of the relationship that we have established with our body, often forced to suffer the heavy interference that comes from a discontented emotional level. They are all clues that a psychosynthesisist can grasp to decide to focus on the aspects of his personality that prevent him from living joyfully. Moving then to talk about joy and entering the realm of quality, the invitation was to leave the world of numbers and quantity to get closer to our higher level, the spiritual one and to take into account that food can be a way of connecting with our soul, a way of integrating spirit and matter. It is precisely on this point that I intend to close my column, while I venture for a new spiral, pushing myself on the ground of what Assagioli called the fifth force of psychology, *psychoenergetics*, and validating as "real", though not entirely scientifically demonstrable, my experience of the teachings of some great initiates, such as Master Mikhaël Aïvanhov and Aurobindo, who have explained how to spiritualize food, extracting from it the elements that can also nourish our soul.

The "Yoga of nutrition" recommends us to create an atmosphere of silence and peace, introduced by a short prayer to get in touch with our higher Self, before starting the magical process of nutrition. Particular impor-

tance is given to the first bite, which should be chewed so slowly that it almost melts in the mouth, without even needing to swallow it. Such slow dissolving of food-matter sets in motion all the gears of the marvelous alchemical process that will involve all our levels. There is a first division which takes place inside the mouth.: the most coarse matter, which we commonly call food, is sent to the stomach, while the most subtle, ethereal elements, and the energy that underlies them, are absorbed by the mouth and immediately utilized to feed the nervous system; if, between a mouthful and the next, some deep breaths are taken, the air will revive and stimulate the flame of combustion, facilitating the extraction from the food of the finest particles, which will spread throughout the body, bringing vitality and sensitivity .

By allowing ourselves during the meal, to feel emotions of love and gratitude towards food - a stimulus that I have intended to give in my psychosynthetic breakfast - it is possible to extract from the astral body even more precious particles than the etheric ones. Here the process of nutrition becomes true nourishment, from which follows a sense of well-being, able to open ourselves to the best qualities of the higher unconscious, such as generosity, benevolence, indulgence.

Further nutrients can be obtained from the mental body, for example by taking a small pause between one course and another, to make a short reflexive meditation. By closing our eyes, dwelling on the history of that food, on its qualities, on the contribution of nature to its growth ... and so on, we can extract further nourishing elements from it.

Usually we do not pay much attention to eating - one of our most consolidated automatisms - and this makes us ignorant of the fact that eating can lead to psychic work of the highest importance: nutrition can really become a work of the spirit on matter.

In the course of our cycle of articles we have used scientific evidence, to explain how certain attitudes can induce a more efficient digestion, but in reality there are also reasons at a more subtle level: for example, we have mentioned that it is a good rule to leave the table still feeling a little hungry, to avoid the feeling of heaviness for having ignored the body's "satiety threshold". The teachings offer us an even more subtle explanation: ha-

ving resisted to having a few more morsels of which we probably still had desire, our etheric body will be pushed into the higher regions to seek that nourishment, which will fill the remaining void, making us feel lighter and more alive, having been nourished by superior elements. Further reasons may resonate even more, if we only focus on the fact that food is a foreign matter, and that as such, not being yet ready to be absorbed, assimilated and distributed throughout the body, it has somehow to be “tamed” and made friends with. The true alchemic process of nourishment takes place when the food is transformed, losing every particle foreign to us: the passage from the external environment, from which it comes, to an interior environment pervaded with love: love is the very irreplaceable agent capable of transforming the matter that enters the body, and until we learn to eat with love, a large part of the food that the body assumes cannot be transformed, as it does not vibrate in harmony with it, and as a result it accumulates, slowing and hindering the functions of the body. The work of the astral body and the mental body during the meal are very important and it may take a long time before certain particles are accepted by the body and digested, simply because the environment was not sufficiently saturated with higher feelings to make them docile and digestible. This is why prayers and blessings before the meal are recommended: food can be favorably influenced and prepared to be well assimilated, in an environment saturated with love and gratitude or, also, as we said, having the heart “enkindled”. Thus the spiritual importance of the act of eating can be realised, and why it is necessary that difficulties and worries be left out of the table, in order to focus only on the magical process of nutrition, and get the fruitful supply of nutrients at all our levels as a result. As usual, all that has been said can become truth only when it is experienced, in line with the nature of psychosynthesis, which is fundamentally a practice. What else could I add? I feel that this is all, thanks for following me, dear psychosynthesists, I wish you good luck with continuing your path and ... I leave you with the recommendation to never lose your taste for food and for life.

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