

INTERVIEW WITH ASSAGIOLI

Solange De Marignac - January 1970

Translation by Gordon Symons

Solange De Marignac

I should like to ask you four questions:

1. Many people fear that old age brings with it physical limitations and that these have a damaging influence on their moral and intellectual capacities. May I ask you, who have been seriously affected with regard to your health, how do you see this problem?
2. We often hear people say: "I am too old to change". You, who believe deeply in evolution, would you like to give your opinion in this matter? Do you have a sense that you can continue to improve yourself, or that there are certain aspects of your thinking which need to change?
3. If it's not indiscreet, can we ask you what you think about death, in particular your own death?
4. Finally, how would you reply to someone who asked you "How should we grow old well?"

Roberto Assagioli

1. Our moral and intellectual capacities are not necessarily influenced by our physical limitations, even when serious, at any age.
There are many examples of this; I will just mention Charles Darwin, who was only able to work for 1-2 hours a day; William James, whose health was precarious during all his life, and above all, the shining example of Adele Kamm, who, confined to her bed by a spinal illness, exercised an apostolic benefit for many sick people.
As for myself, my considerable physical limitations due to my age do not seem to be influencing my capacities, as I shall say presently.

I even gain some advantages from some of these limitations. In my view, much depends on our attitude. A serene acceptance of our limitations, such as partial deafness (and this is valid for all limitations, not just physical, and who hasn't got limitations?), greatly reduces their negative influence. They can be considered as a challenge to be overcome, thus prompting compensations and even super-compensations.

2. I can declare sincerely that I am able to continue to develop, and that I am applying myself no less actively, and perhaps better than before. My thinking is constantly developing; new aspects of reality often present themselves to my mind. This arouses joy and enthusiasm in me, but it is not without drawbacks, because I feel driven to change and to improve (at least I hope so) that which I have written in the past, although I realise that I might do better to write something new with the time that is left to me on this earth.
3. I neither desire nor fear the death of my body, because I am deeply convinced, not only of the afterlife, but of the perpetuity of life. I am convinced that the "spiritual nucleus" which is our very essence, is immortal, and that its manifestations will be renewed with an ever wider consciousness and an even greater creative power.

4. In order to age well, one should do what I have called "the psychosynthesis of the ages", that is, to keep present and alive in us, to some extent, that which is best and most valuable to us in each age. The openness to the world and the sense of wonder of the child; the fervour of the adolescent, the dash and dynamism of the youth, the equilibrium and maturity of the adult, the many fruits of experience with their gifts of wisdom which come with old age. In this way, the old person has the privilege of becoming again a child with children, a youth with the young, communicating with benevolent understanding with people at each stage of life.
Thus, while withdrawing gradually from participation in external living, the old man (and this is equally valid for women), can become a solid point of support and a centre of beneficent irradiation for those around him.