

Moreover, in order to create the right *protection* of the ground so prepared, it will be useful to *disidentify*, to be the right distance from internal and external events. In the presence of a sufficiently integrated personality, “We need to reach the right mental silence and the right openness to the word that is trying to express itself. To hold to the interest, to the direction, to our aspiration and to make it grow”.⁷

5. **Sowing** is the *inspiration* and it is not among the things we can receive by choice, it comes from a non-ordinary level of consciousness. Working so that the “soil” that receives the seed is clean, airy and fertile, is certainly in our power.

“As human beings, we all receive highs from the superconscious, continuously and without realizing it, influences or aspirations that translate into ideas, ideals, aspirations, works of art.”⁸

*“Knowledge is a flash for intuitive Mind ... which springs from silence and contains everything Just waiting for us to become clearer: not that we rise, but that we detach ourselves.”*⁹

In conclusion, trusting the words of Sri Aurobindo, we can work to “unblock” our personality and take care of our inner garden in order to witness the birth of new buds, welcome them in our lives, contributing to their growth and manifestation.

PLACES FOR CENTRALITY

Translation by Achille Cattaneo

*“Our era has witnessed the birth of” non-places “: shopping centers, airports, green spaces, service areas, residential areas ... Inanimate scenographies in front of which exist our lives, people reduced to simple users consumers of spaces. Planned, conceived at the table in the studies of urban planners and professionals of the territory, non-places always descend from above. And the principles from which they were born, economic and purely functional, are valid for any point of the globe. A place instead is a world unto itself. It is easy to orientate because it always has a right and a left, a high and a low, a center. It is an expression of an order that we understand instinctively and with which we can identify ourselves. As if we find ourselves, even when we enter it for the first time, something that belongs to us and perhaps we did not even know we had lost.”*¹

In the pre-modern vision, from antiquity to a still near past, the idea of “Center” has instead assumed the value of the depository core of meaning. Let us think of the historical centers of our cities, where buildings symbolizing spirituality gather together with those of economic and political power, all together identifying their identity: the same colloquial expression “going to the town-center” - explains Roland Barthes - has in itself the value of “going to the center of things”, where it is supposed and imagined to be able to meet the fullness and authenticity of a place.²

The real “places” are recognizable as unique and unrepeatable products of the slow combined action of human intervention and natural agents and precisely from this they draw poetry, intensity, character and their own voice. They are never neutral and generic spaces, but, on the contrary, they have the capacity to escape us from ordinary time to immerse ourselves in a dilated dimen-

sion and at the same time to reassure us, to make us feel firmly rooted in the present.

“Nullus locus sine genius” sentenced the Roman grammarian and philologist Servius: there is no place that does not have its own tutelary deity. For the ancient culture, as well as for the animist populations surviving today

“the greatest danger, the misfortune that has always threatened men, is to live in a land abandoned by the gods, and therefore devoid of a center, devoid of meaning”.³

Some places more than others allow you to translate with good approximation into a physical, emotional and mental experience, the concept of “centrality” that lies at the heart of Psychosynthesis. Visiting them with the right attitude can serve as an effective anchoring of theory to matter. This provided that you are willing to cross the threshold with the awareness that, well beyond its practical function of access, of transit from a public sphere to a more secluded and protected one, it always also carries with it the meaning placed on the border between one way and another, between a level and another of our own interiority. It is therefore an active work that requires, as always, a certain amount of will.

The most effective, from this point of view, are (obviously) all the architectures with a central plan, whose technical name immediately explains its symmetrical nature. Humanity has always meant the Center to be a sacred point in which the divine and human dimension come into mysterious contact. In the mausoleums and in the classical temples, as in Christian churches and baptistries, we find that the deep symbolic meaning of the Center is everywhere the same: Pure Being, principle of emanation and term of the return of all creation, which in turn binds itself and dialogues with the symbolologies of the fundamental mystical geometric figures: circle, square / rectangle, octagon, cross. In the Center the antagonistic tendencies are resolved, not by equilibrium or static harmony between the opposites, but as a concentrated energy point, from which the movements of the one towards the manifold, the interior towards the outside, the eternal versus temporality. The Center: empty hub of the wheel, place of synthesis and organization.

The Center as the Sun and, in the Christian translation of this meaning, the Center as Christ. In places created by man to favor the contemplative dimension and the welcome of the spirit, at the center we will always find greater luminosity - the circular oculus at the apex of the hemispherical cover of the Pantheon as the lantern or the crown of windows crowning domes very different from one another in terms of age and style - and an inevitable symbolic element to mark it, or, more simply, a free space where you can stop and observe above and all around us, with recollection and wonder.

In a handwritten note, Roberto Assagioli thus noted his intention to somewhat clarify and develop the concept of Center:

“to talk about peace, serenity, the sense of security and trust that we feel when we are gathered in the center of our being . Making them feel the value. Say how it is possible to see everything in us and outside of us in its true proportions, as from there we rightly evaluate everything “.⁴

In certain enclosed gardens and in cloisters I feel easier and more immediate the opportunity to represent and to understand vividly, by analogy, the fundamental process of the transition from the periphery to the center, of finding oneself, and therefore of disidentification and self-identification. I suspect that this has to do with my childhood habit with this kind of places and with the suggestion that they already exerted on me, many years before even knowing that there was something that responded to the name of Psychosynthesis. The house of my maternal grandparents, in Florence, bordered the Cloister of the Oblates and I still keep some childhood photos taken in the shade of those cedars, among those hedges, gravel paths, the oleander’s heads. My grandmother’s office then, where I used to go very often, was on the ground floor of an ancient palace in Borgo degli Albizzi, and overlooked an internal courtyard with a garden in which was not allowed to enter. The pale light poured from high over a mossy fountain dominated by a marble sculpture, in the midst of a lush triumph of green plants, almost the appearance of a deity in a primeval forest. For example, let’s imagine visiting that special garden, separated from the world but exposed to the sun, wind and rain, which is a convent cloister, where each element takes on a symbolic sacred value. We enter, possibly after some conscious breath, with the senses well opened, maintaining silence and contact with our perceptions. It is warmly recommended to bring a notebook and a pen. Depending on the place and time we choose, the incidence of light will be different. First of all, follow the perimeter loggia: the walls may be white and free, or may be decorated with paintings, or may still bear crests, emblems, tombstones, inscriptions, historical or funeral memories. Let’s look at them by calmly walking close to them: in the presence of frescoed

cycles we could consider the character and the expressiveness of the figures, the variety of landscapes in which the scene unfolds, immersing ourselves in the flow of narration, either figurative or written. We note without censorship or judgments the different impressions that this observation arouses in us. After a first reconnaissance tour we return to closely observe, in more detail, what we feel we have resonated inwardly, whatever the tonality of these resonances. Let's pay attention to what has touched or involved us most, to which we feel we have mostly connected.

Then we find a place where we like to stop - perhaps the comfortable turnaround seat that often marks the boundary between the portico and the open space - and we look in that direction: kept in a grassy mantle (usually a clover, allusive to the Trinity) or paved, we keep in mind that it ideally represents the Garden of Eden and its conditions of full immersion in the divine bliss. The square plant (like the rectangular, which is a variant) speaks to us of definition, delimitation and stability: model of the sacred enclosure, it is from the beginning founded on the symbology of the number four and on the symmetry of the opposite sides. It is also a symbol of the earth compared to the sky (circle) but, at another level, also of the created universe (earth and sky), in opposition to the non-created and the creator.⁵

Like a good garden, even the cloister is built on one of the infinite variations of the relationship between the two fundamental sacred geometric figures, the square and the circle, which Plato defined as absolutely beautiful in itself.

Starting from the center, immobile, the surface usually comes in a cross that divides into four parts in flowerbeds or sections. In that center you will find a tree - the *arbor vitae* of Genesis - from which four paths branch off, reminiscent of the four rivers of biblical memory. Alternatively, there may be a well or a "fountain of life", both a Marian embassy and a means of mediation between the earthly and the celestial dimensions.⁶

The same plants on which our eyes are placed have never been casual, but punctually reported to moral and spiritual qualities: cedars, orange trees, cypresses, palms, olive trees, rose bushes ... Even assuming that all these hidden meanings do not interest us, we could at least consider what the garden for what comes from the remotest antiquity says: a living mandala and a place of initiation. Perhaps because the human psyche can, symbolically, satisfy its aspiration to seek its own center in itself and at the same time reconnect with the heart of the cosmos.

Let us then yield to the magnetic and unspeakable attraction that that center has on us: let us direct ourselves to the heart of the mandala and stop there. We might have to climb the step of a basement, to face the well, touch the edge of the fountain, its water, or the trunk of the tree

with our fingers. Let's release, finding contact with the rhythm of our breathing. Let's close our eyes for a moment and then reopen them and go back to observe in a vigilant and conscious way: above us the sky, all around, equidistant, the perimeter loggias with their narrative contents that, only slowly turning round us, we will see parade in the sight of us like a film or "like the shadows of Chinese theater"⁷

Finding ourselves in the Center naturally enhances the viewer's consciousness: the field of vision expands and manages to include everything. From here it is no longer even so immediate to recognize exactly where the fresco is, the bas-relief or the engraved phrase that only a moment ago had enticed us.

The impressions noted on the notebook, re-reading them now, with the sense of freedom and the possibility of choice that being in the Center gives, seem to have lost the emotional charge that had made us vibrate, diminished in intensity and importance. Or rather: they are and remain an integral part of the experience, but it is as if from this point of view our consciousness had made them to decant: "*extracting from the opposites their gift, their message, but staying with their center above "distilling the essences"*", Assagioli writes.⁸

Let us savor this state as far as possible, before regaining the exit: whether it is a temple, cloister or garden what matters is to turn your back on the noise of the world for a while, so that the magic of the "place" works, awakening in us the feeling of the marvelous and the mystery, and leading us by the hand to rediscover that world, but to live it this time from within, intimately.

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