

From the Kitchen

1 December 2010



There is something wonderful about a sun-dried towel after coming out of a refreshing shower; ironing a shirt and then putting it on immediately, while it is still warm; writing on textured paper with a fountain pen; having a bath and then letting the water out very, very slowly; listening to Bach choral music, loudly.

Nourishing the senses nourishes the person at a deep level. We eat and drink a lot of junk that does not nourish the body and may even harm it. Similarly, we assail our senses with junk that can do us harm on many levels: grating music, disturbing images, garish colours and colours that clash, jagged shapes, clutter at home and at work. We wear clothing made of fibres that shut us off from our surroundings and we tend to pass the majority of each day in containers.

There is something wonderful about sitting in a clearing in the forest on fresh grass, its smell just perceptible, with the buzz of passing insets and the rustling of the leaves in the gentle breeze; lying in bed at dawn and listening to the birds waking up; the changing tastes of a good red wine as it flows from the tip of the tongue to the back of the throat and sends its teasing aromas into the nose; stroking the soft fur of an angora rabbit; the feeling of river mud oozing between bare toes; my wife's fingers raking through my hair.

We tend to keep ourselves too busy to feed ourselves properly – not just food but the partaking of all that nourishes us. Too often we have breakfast 'on the run', lunch hurriedly between important tasks and only sit down to a big meal in the evening, when snacking on fruit may be more appropriate. How often do we enjoy food while doing nothing else? How often do we sit and really listen to music? How often do we walk with no destination? How often do we sit on a hill or cliff-top and enjoy the view? When did you last do something just for you?

There is something wonderful about taking an hour off (or a day) for no other reason than that you want to; to create a space in which you can be any way you desire; to eat when you want to and what you feel will nourish you, or just for the taste; to breathe some fresh air before re-entering the conditioned space in which you live or work.

We easily fill our minds with information that does not help us to live our lives more constructively or enjoyably or informs our actions in a positive way; often it increases our anxiety or our sense of outrage, or merely feeds our puerile fascination with things that don't concern us. We fill our minds to the extent that there is no room for what is important or even useful. It is hard to avoid this clutter of data – it is in the newspapers and on the radio and television and permeates the Internet. It takes an effort and deliberate intent to avoid the meaningless drivel. Not that everything has to be deep and meaningful.

There is something wonderful about losing one's self in the make-belief of a well-told story, be it in a book or a film. The losing allows a retreat from the busy, alert, cogitating, judging self and creates space for those other aspects of our being – those that ultimately make life

worth living and *do* give meaning to it. Combine the book or film with a warm bath, a glass of wine or cognac and some exquisite chocolates or other delicacies, and bliss may be experienced.

For most of us, navigating between the banal and the transpersonal is a continual process, akin to lurching from one side of the road to the other and having to dodge the traffic on the way. There is the temptation to remain on one side or the other and there is danger in this: either staying attached to the outward, material world and missing out on the esoteric; or getting lost in bliss and finding it difficult, if not impossible, to operate in the outer world. In a balanced life there is room for both and both are important.