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Dayton, Ohio

## The Understanding of Eating Disorders

Recent articles have reported the frightening news that teens with anorexia and bulimia are promoting these eating disorders on websites—giving tips and strategies for how to be dangerously thin. Readers should know that the cause of eating disorders has been explained by Aesthetic Realism, the education founded by the great American philosopher Eli Siegel, and taught in New York City.

For ten years I suffered from anorexia and bulimia. I had loss of menstruation, eroding teeth, dizziness and more. My parents took me to doctors and weight control centers, and later I tried psychiatry. But no one understood the cause, and I thought I would spend my life living this hell.

Eli Siegel, who understood the human mind, explained that the way a person sees food arises from how he or she sees the whole world. He wrote:

*“The taking of food is more than nutrition alone; it is also a profound homage of the self to its surroundings. We are saying when we eat, and with humility, too, that we need the world from which our food comes. We say, unconsciously, when we eat well: Bless reality which gives us our daily nutriment.—If we can’t logically bless, our daily bread will be a daily peril.”* [Self and World, p. 342. Definition Press, NY, NY]

Aesthetic Realism shows that the trouble about food comes from the fight

between our deepest desire, to like the world honestly, and the hope to have contempt, to build ourselves up by making less of things. Contempt is as ordinary as not listening when someone is talking, making a sarcastic remark to a man you care for, or simply feeling you don’t need things—books, people or food.

Food comes from the world, and if a person is angry that she needs the world she may not want to have food inside of her at all, or she will take it in contemptuously. In Aesthetic Realism consultations, I

was asked kind and deep questions about how I

saw many things—including my family, school, men and food.

My consultants explained the cause of eating disorders definitively when they said, “Bulimia is a way of managing, having the world please you but not affect you deeply; and anorexia is a means of having yourself pure, without any additions. Both arise from contempt.”

Studying this, I saw it was true. It explained how I saw food, but other things too—the way I could manage my five brothers and not want to know them, or flirt with boys while remaining cool and aloof myself, or how I could slam my bedroom door to get away from everyone.

Through Aesthetic Realism, I learned to what it means to like the world, including how to use food for that purpose, and my life changed. I now eat three meals a day, with a

respect and pleasure I didn’t think was possible.

Eli Siegel stated in this Aesthetic Realism principle: “The one way to like the world honestly, not as a conquest of one’s own, is to see the world as the aesthetic oneness of opposites.” I was thrilled to see, for example, how deep-dish blueberry pie—which I love to make—is tart and sweet, soft and firm, light and dark. The blueberries in the pie retain their firm round shape even as their juice mixes and bakes with the soft flour, eggs and butter. And while the filling inside is a deep, dark rich purple, on top is a light golden, powdery crust.

I learned that these opposites—hard and soft, light and dark, sharpness and sweetness—are in me too, in my family, in all people. As I respected food more through seeing it this way, I was able to be proportionate about it and keep it inside of me.

I want the millions of women suffering with anorexia and bulimia and their families to know there is an explanation. No woman has to live with this pain anymore or possibly die.

For information, call the not-for-profit Aesthetic Realism Foundation at (212) 777-4490, or visit the website at <http://www.AestheticRealism.org>

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by Meryl Nietsch-Cooperman