

Dynamic Nutrition

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If we look at the meaning of the term 'dynamic' or 'dynamics', we find that dynamics is the branch of every science which is concerned with forces or changes. Thus, in a more extended sense it is a matter of development. Furthermore, we glean that the forces and properties belonging to dynamics promote growth or change in a system, an organism or process. Dynamics are even at home in mechanics; here dynamics are defined as the influence of forces on the way in which bodies move. In music people speak of dynamics in the differentiation of the strength of the notes, that is, volume.

Thus, we may say everything that has to do with forces and is neither uniform nor static is dynamics. It is expressed in liveliness or in energy. The liveliness which is conveyed can be perceived by us. It can be perceived with all living creatures – whether plants, animals or humans. Even with water, for example: if we imagine still water, a lake with a smooth surface, we hardly associate this with dynamics. With a waterfall, on the other hand, it is obvious that one can speak about dynamics. Merely imagining it without the concrete images before us, the inner resonance called forth is experienced completely differently.

Now Rudolf Steiner talks about us only being able to understand the human being, if we view him or her as "a physical-spiritual being, both substantial and dynamic, in other words, a being of forces" (Lecture of 21.10.1923, GA 230). This is easily comprehensible, as with human beings and in life altogether it is a matter of development and change. Human beings as dynamic beings need forces to stimulate their own forces and to maintain life and development. This is where nutrition comes into play. In lecture 4 of the *Agriculture Course* Rudolf Steiner mentions that "most of what we eat daily, ..." is "not there to be absorbed and stored as substance in the body. But rather most of it" is "there in order that the forces contained in it" are passed on "to the body" (lecture of 12.06.1924, GA 239). This induces us to conclude that we need to view nutrition as a dynamic process, as the working of forces.

Forces are strengthened through being used. Even with muscle power it is the case that only their active use makes them strong; it is not resting on the sofa

that enables them to grow. And their power becomes so much greater, the greater the counterforce that they meet is.

Applying this to nutrition means, though, that those foods that provide the strongest forces provide the greatest stimulus for the human organism. In the process of digestion our own forces are stimulated to overcome the forces in the food. Here the question of quality comes into play. How does food become 'charged with energy', i.e. dynamic? Which measures of cultivation and tending, but also what kinds of food foster the development of people's forces? It is not so much about the Beta-Carotin content of carrots, nor about the vitamin C content of apples, but about whether the carrots or the apples unfold their potential and are able to develop the dynamic element in their nature, that is, their formative forces. Thus, nutrition turns into an encounter which is stimulating, because our counterpart, the carrot or the apple, has such a different dynamic from the one we have ourselves.

Dr. med. Gerhard Schmidt (1908–2003), who headed the Section for Agriculture and Nutrition of the time from 1963 to 1970, developed a concept of nutrition after his period at the Goetheanum, which he presented under the title "Dynamische Ernährungslehre" (The Dynamics of Nutrition) in three volumes (Basic Volumes, Volumes 1 and 2, remaining stock in German and English available).

In the preface to volume 1 he explains the background to the concept in detail:

Rudolf Steiner has often indicated that the substances which we absorb through our food serve rather the stimulation of, the unfolding of our activity in, our organism than the depositing of substance. "What is at stake is not the formation of substance that increases weight in our metabolism, but rather the issue whether we are able with the food to take in the living quality of the forces in the right way". (Rudolf Steiner, 12.06.1924, GA 327). Thus he expresses the key relevance entailed in a dynamic theory of nutrition. Friedrich Boas in his book "Dynamische Botanik" made the fundamental attempt to portray "the plant not as a form, not merely as a function, but rather as a centre of forces and effective working in nature" (Fried-

rich Boas, *Dynamische Botanik* (Dynamic Botany), 3rd edition, Munich 1949). Thus, he made the link to Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt, but also to Lessing, who put it as follows, “In nature everything is interconnected, everything crosses over everything else, everything swaps over with everything else, everything changes in to something else”. Focusing on such ‘natural interactions’ was the method with which Rudolf Steiner approached the problem of agriculture and nutrition, for “in nature, in the being of the world as a whole, everything is involved in interactions. The one thing always has an effect on the other” (Rudolf Steiner, 15.06.1924, GA 327). Thereby, Lessing’s statement is significantly extended: “not only in nature, not only within the earthly world, this dynamic law prevails”. In reality such interactive working takes place ‘in the being of the world as a whole’, i.e. between the earthly and the regions beyond the earth. The transformations relate not only to the substances and forces, but equally well to the realm of the supersensible, of the ‘formative forces’. The interactions are something truly overarching that stretches out to include the earth and the cosmos. Without this knowledge from Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual research it is no longer possible to conceive of agriculture in a modern sense nor healthy nutrition in keeping with the times. In this sense the ‘dynamics of nutrition’ should be mentioned here as a foundation for a new science of the interaction of food with the human being. In its principle characteristics as

in many details this has already been developed by Rudolf Steiner. However, the key thing is to go carefully through the available building blocks and by fitting them together to allow the impressive new construction to appear which is revealed through such endeavours”.

In nutrition, in the digestion and in the metabolism everything is constantly moving and being transformed. Everything flows and develops on the basis of interactions between the living food and the human being who eats it. One can say nutrition is the perfect example of dynamics. There is no standstill; a standstill would be death. Against this background nutrition is a question of dynamics, above all, when it is a matter of understanding the human being as a being of forces.

Gerhard Schmidt’s dynamic nutrition theory has spread as ‘the dynamics of nutrition’ beyond the English-speaking world. In France Joel Acrement, former chef at the Perceval Waldorf School in Chatou (near Paris), is working with this concept and has published various books on the basis of it. Most recently, in 2022, a book called “Un autre regard sur l’alimentation. La cuisine des légumes” (A different View of Nutrition: Vegetable Cuisine) appeared in collaboration with Jean-Michel Florin. In the description of a previous



Rhine Falls, Schaffhausen, Switzerland
Photo: Jasmin Peschke

book "Ma relation à la nourriture, introduction à l'alimentation dynamique" (My Relationship to Nutrition, an Introduction to the Dynamics of Nutrition) it is emphasised that, on the one hand, of course, scientific facts and nutritional studies have their rightful place, yet they need to be extended to include a process of developing an awareness of our own relationship to food. This is an area that frequently becomes very much neglected. The harmonious relationship of these two aspects can lead us to be free in our approach to our daily fare. Joel Acrement (as indeed Rudolf Steiner before him and later on Gerhard Schmidt) does not set up any strict rules, applicable to everyone. However, he gives us food for thought to enable each person to use his ideas and make conscious decisions that are suitable for their own being and their personal situation. "Thus consciousness can penetrate the realm of nutrition and can provide the individual with space in which they can exercise their freedom".

In the field of nutrition a dynamic approach to the work is adopted in keeping with the Agriculture Section's way of working. The scientific facts, also the nutrients, are laid as a foundation and extended by the dimension of dynamics described above as interactions and forces. Understanding the interconnections of growth and differentiation, or rather the ripening

of the nutritious plants that stimulate a good quality of nourishment, leads to insights into the way various foods work. Moreover, mindful eating and the culture of nutrition, consciously developed by the individual, have a positive effect on people's own health as well as establishing healthy conditions in the nutritional system. Starting from the relationship to ourselves, fostered by our approach to nutrition, we will become capable of relating in social situations and in the context of systems, organisations and organisms. Thus, competence in and a positive attitude towards our way of feeding ourselves daily as well as a degree of independence are fostered.

If the individual experiences that they can be effective, they can experience themselves as part of the dynamics of the whole. That is what it is all about that each individual person can see their part in the health of the whole and shapes this as part of the community for the community.