

Section for Agriculture: Coordination Centre for Nutrition

Specific quality

In June 2016 Jasmin Peschke started to set up the Coordination Centre for Nutrition within the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum. Since then she has been exploring topical issues in the biodynamic movement and organized events. On World Food Day (16 October) she intends to present nutrition in the press as a creative process and a matter of relationships.

Sebastian Jüngel: What kind of issues have you been dealing with since you started the Coordination Centre?

Jasmin Peschke: In the Section's Nutrition Group we have been looking into questions of warmth since 2016. I was able to present this topic at the annual conference of the Section for Agriculture in February and will, together with two fellow nutritionists, offer two workshops at this year's Annual Conference of the Medical Section. It is great that this work can have an impact on other disciplines as well, because one thing is clear: warmth is essential.

The Swiss professional development conference for teachers offered a workshop on nutrition for the first time, demonstrating the principles of healthy eating. For instance: natural fruit yogurts, unlike the artificially flavoured varieties, convey to children a sense of authenticity, which is an important basic experience.

Jüngel: Which topics were you asked about?

Peschke: Breeders, for instance, ask: what is good food quality? How do we recognize it? Is it the capacity for ripening or the plant's ability to actively deal with environmental conditions or pests and diseases? I also often receive letters from various countries from people who wish to be part of a network or are interested in events and publications. I generally like to encourage people to come to their own conclusions rather than give them ready-made instructions and recipes.

Cooking as alchemy

Jüngel: How important are topics such as veganism or food waste?

Peschke: None of them is particularly prominent at the moment.

Jüngel: How well has the quality of biodynamic food been researched?

Peschke: There are a number of studies. But it is also important to let the consumers experience the specific quality of this food. We will have a unit on this at the next Agricultural conference.

Jüngel: Your further-training week on community catering has shown that the quality of a meal also depends on the respectful attitude of the cooks. One often hears of the rude tone in restaurant kitchens. And there is the literary image of the «evil cook».

Peschke: Here, again, it is a question of warmth – warm relationships and mutual appreciation have to do with quality. Cooks are alchemists, really: preparing a meal is a creative process, a cultural deed: nature does not supply us with a watercress risotto, for instance. Cooking with grains can be really interesting and delicious.

From knowledge to application

Jüngel: You are saying that nutrition is a question of the will: when the food is broken down in digestion, forces are being released – intolerances emerge when the organism cannot cope with a particular substance. What does this mean?

Peschke: As human beings we have the task to bring the spiritual and the physical, heaven and earth, together. That certainly is a question of will. If you ask consumers what they think healthy food is, they all know that wholefood, fruit and vegetables are part of a healthy diet. But they do not behave accordingly: the consumption of meat and sugar is rising steadily.

This phenomenon that insight does not necessarily lead to appropriate actions was identified by Rudolf Steiner as a nutritional problem in 1924. He said people were lacking the strength to build the bridge from their thoughts to their actions. What does that mean for us today? Where can that strength come from and how can it be nurtured? It starts, for instance, with the conscious perception of the aroma that is typical of a particular fruit, from when we are chewing it down to its complete breaking down in the gut. We need foods which we can really meet, ripe foods that offer us resistance. What is alien to us is interesting and enriching – just like meeting other people.



Food and social responsibility: Jasmin Peschke
Photo: Verena Wahl

Nutrition as a relationship question

Jüngel: What is your personal focus of interest?

Peschke: It's what I call the «cross of nutrition». We human beings form the vertical line; we are nurtured by the cosmos and the earth and develop the will and power to be creative. With this impulse we create the horizontal line: the supply chain from the seed to farming, processing, selling to food preparation, food culture and social community. Nutrition is a question of relationship, it creates interdisciplinarity.

Jüngel: What does that mean?

Peschke: It means that what I have on my plate today was in the shop yesterday and on the field the day before that. As a consumer I indirectly shape the landscape and through my buying behaviour I make it possible for the farmer to do his work well. Because caring for the animals and for the land, and working with the preparations are as important as the production of food. But consumers must be prepared to pay the «right» price.

Jüngel: How do you see the future?

Peschke: The material and energetic dimensions of nutrition have been explored and explained so that we now have an accessible and comprehensible picture which can guide us and provide practical indications regarding the specific quality of biodynamic food. |

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