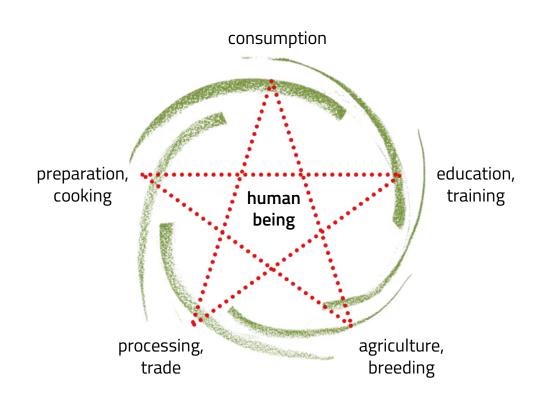
From food system to food organism

Steps to a successful transformation

Ideas and exercises | Dr. Jasmin Peschke





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What it is all about

Our meals and our choice of foods determine what we buy and what we cook. Our shopping in turn influences how agriculture produces the foods. Strictly speaking, we consumers are at the centre! As a result of our eating habits, we create the conditions in which we live.

The principal question for all of us is, how we want to live on the earth, how we live with our fellow human beings, how we treat the animals, what attitude we have towards the plants – and, finally, how we relate to the earth and the cosmos. Our personal health cannot be looked at in isolation or independently of the environment.

We currently view humanity as the cause of numerous crises in terms of health, soil, climate change and environmental pollution, including the global disparity in the distribution of food. We observe a lack of connection to plants and animals, evidenced by the fact that they are reduced to factors of production. There is almost no active connection to nature and the earth. Likewise, many people only carry on their relationships with each other indirectly, via technical media. And we are often only dimly aware of the relationship to ourselves, to our own true needs. This disconnection leads to a lack of attention to the consequences of our own actions. The result is exploitation of resources at all levels.

A change of direction is needed. This requires a change in our thinking and behaviour. It requires a new mindset. Albert Einstein already pointed this out: "Problems can never be solved by the way of thinking that caused them."

The way to a healthy future can be achieved if our food system – in other words, production, processing, trade and consumption – is transformed into a living food organism in which all those involved work independently like organs, but still act together as a whole. Its most important principle is the well-being and joint development of all those involved. Human beings are at the centre and act with initiative. This brochure describes the crucial difference between the food system and the food organism, and what is involved in the further development of the latter.

The faculties needed for a transformation of this kind are attentiveness, the capacity to build relationships and love. So it starts with us, with the little things. In order to learn and cultivate these capacities, I have selected specific exercises from nutritional therapy and biodynamic research, and describe them in a way which makes it easy to integrate them into everyday life. If thinking is enriched with heart forces, then it can make our actions fruitful for the benefit of all. It is about the one life of all of us. About the one future of all of us.

Food system: definition and concepts

Definition

The term **system** comes from the ancient Greek word *sýstēma*. It describes a "whole made up of several parts". As early as 1950, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, an exponent of theoretical biology, was the first to define a system as interactions that demarcate themselves from their environment. The environment, in turn, is composed of more interacting components. Von Bertalanffy viewed the connection and relationships between the separate parts of the system as key, because it is the separate parts that make up the system. They are determined by the fact that they fulfil different, specific and delimited functions and tasks within the whole. So, in systems theory, systems are viewed as self-organising functional units such as, for example, an ecosystem, that reorganises itself if a disturbance occurs. If a plant or animal is added or lost from the system, then after a certain time a new balance in the ecosystem is created by adaptation.²

This idea of a system forms an important basis for our concept of the food organism, which differs in that we start from a common further development and not merely a balance within the whole.

In relation to food, we talk about a **food system.** This includes everything that is involved in feeding people: from producing the food via processing and trade to consumption. In some cases the inputs (energy and other resources) and outputs (such as wastes) are also taken into account.

A food system is, by definition, the totality of the relevant sub-areas of a society responsible for the food supply. It includes "intermediate products for agriculture (fertilisers, plant protection products, feed), the method of agricultural management (conventional or organic farming), food processing and marketing, food preparation and consumption, and the disposal of packaging material and organic wastes"³.

For the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), a food system consists of elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure, institutions, etc.) and activities related to the production, processing, sale, preparation and consumption of food.^{4,5}



Various concepts for implementation

When it comes to implementation in reality, there are various concepts with different focuses.

One frequently mentioned concept is the **value chain.** This is linear, and the interactions of the individual elements are not taken into account. While it deals with food, with this concept the value generation stops at the product which sits on the shop shelf at a particular price. An agricultural value chain includes, for example, the producing farmers, the processing food industry, the wholesalers and retailers as well as transport, logistics and export companies, but also the provision of services by credit institutions and agricultural advisory services. Although customers actually create value by preparing meals and producing the eating culture, they are not considered in this concept.

The concept of **agri-food systems** focuses on the perspective of agricultural production. It comprises the agricultural primary production of food and other products from crop growing, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry and aquaculture, and the food supply chain from production to consumption.⁷

If the food system has extra attributes such as "sustainable" or "organic", then this gives it a particular alignment. For instance, if the objective is sustainability, we talk about **sustainable food systems.** But sustainability of itself does not involve a judgement, it merely means that the focus is on conserving resources – be this energy or productivity. The quality of the products or whether we can obtain good nourishment from them is of lower importance. We speak of **organic food systems** when we mean foods produced organically. In this case human nutrition does have a role. What is referred to as the **global food system** concerns feeding the world. Around

half the world population is malnourished.⁸ On the one hand increasing numbers of people have too little to eat and go hungry; on the other, more and more people eat too much and suffer from overweight and obesity as well as associated diseases. This imbalance is addressed by the concept of the global food system.

Cindy McCain, executive director of the World Food Programme, believes that, in view of the growing number of people without enough to eat, we need to change course in order to succeed. The situation needs to be addressed "quickly, cleverly and compassionately", otherwise we will not be able to reduce the number of undernourished people, which had already risen to over 120 million by 2022. Despite the United Nations having postulated years ago that hunger would be overcome by 2030.⁹

The systemic approach takes into account that all the elements are interconnected and form a whole, contrary to the value chain which, as an open chain, forms a straight line. In practical terms this means that healthy food can only come about through healthy conditions in production, processing and trade. According to the above-mentioned system definition by Bertalanffy, the food system is closed, in other words separated from the outside. This does not correspond to the reality of our lives. We can simply take the example of a biodynamic farm where the natural resources – in other words the soil, landscape and climatic conditions – play an important part in the farming methods and activities. A biodynamic farm is inconceivable without its environment. Even the cosmos plays a part.

Developing the system idea further therefore means thinking of the system as open to the surroundings, as this reflects the actual situation.

In all the concepts mentioned so far, human beings are missing. On the one hand they produce the entire concept and on the other they create the relationships between the elements through their actions. An exception to this is the **Conscious Food Systems Alliance** network that was initiated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This network explicitly includes the human component and encourages a different mindset. It comprises a movement of specialists from the areas of food, agriculture and awareness raising, who pursue the common aim of supporting people from all areas of the food and agriculture system in cultivating the inner abilities to enable a systemic change and regeneration.¹⁰

From food system to food organism: the transformation

Living creatures are organisms. By definition an organism (from the Greek *órganon*: an instrument) is broadly a structured whole that demonstrates living development. You can think of it like this: all the parts are not only mutually related in their form and function but are also crucially affected by the whole. In an organism, the parts do not simply lie next to one another, as in a dead mechanistic structure, but are connected inwardly with the whole, thus forming a unified process. Accordingly, an organism is not a collection of matter. Aristotle in fact claimed that, because an organism is oriented towards an aim, in other words determined by a purpose, it is more than the sum of its parts. Life forms the organism. This means, it absorbs impulses and changes them. The connection to the environment and therefore the harmony with the surroundings, is specific to the concept of the organism. Despite all the external influences, an organism is able to maintain its integrity. This is possible because all the organs of which it is composed are connected to each other and contribute to the total identity, each in their own way.

Rudolf Steiner stressed in this context, "that here the outer manifestation is governed by an **inner principle**, that the whole works in every organ. That outer manifestation, the spatial juxtaposition of its parts, can also be observed after its life is destroyed, because it does still remain for a time. But what we have before us as a dead organism is in reality no longer an organism. That principle has disappeared which permeated all the particulars".¹²

So an organism can only function if its organs serve the whole and recognise each other and adapt to each other. Let us take this as a symbol and develop the concept of the food system into that of a food organism. This moves the human being into the centre. With an attitude of interest for the well-being and further development of those involved (organs) – whether these be farmer, processor or cook – we work on the basis of healthy eating and a healthy eating culture. The human being is the ordering principle, bearing the idea and therefore the development of the whole. This requires connection – a capacity that only we humans can develop.

Nature then becomes culture, because something new arises that does not exist in this form in nature and would not exist without human beings. This is the case with farming, which then becomes agri-culture. But it is primarily so in cooking and in dining culture.

Biodynamic food organism: the human being at the centre

We are all consumers, we eat food and make meals. Through a varied diet of high-quality foods we create the basis for a healthy life, for joy in our work and for our performance. If we look beyond our own interests, we become interested in a sustainable food culture based on a healthy soil in healthy conditions. How is the farmer doing, the one whose dairy cows had to stay inside all day last summer as a result of the heat? Can the gardener produce enough cucumbers to meet the needs of the retail sector? Everything is interrelated.

In the biodynamic food organism, the foods come from biodynamic agriculture, and this requires the cultivation of seed and animal breeds. Some of the harvested products are processed, or in any case sold, whether in the organic food market, the supermarket or the farm shop. Meals are created through preparation and cooking. Cooking is a creative, human activity, because of all living creatures on earth, it is only human beings who cook and thus produce something new. Education and training are necessary in all areas. Everything is linked to everything else and forms a circle that is open to the environment, like a typical organism, that communicates to the outside and inside.

The organs work independently but serve the whole. The driver, the overriding principle, the idea and the reason for a food organism is the human being. The human is the creator. This is symbolised by the five-pointed star inside the circle. Each of the neighbours exists in a direct connection to each other in the circle. Through the human being, the five-pointed star, all the elements are connected to each other. Food preparation needs guests who eat, and trade and processing in order to obtain the ingredients. Knowledge and skill (education) are also necessary in order to prepare an appealing meal. The basis of this is the fruits of the field, from agriculture.

So all the elements play a common tune and the conductor is the human being. He knows every instrument. Each element is independent, develops in relationship to the whole and contributes to the development of the whole. All serve an idea: the idea of feeding the human being as a basis for physical as well as emotional and spiritual development on the earth. The human being becomes the foundation. The biodynamic food organism comes about through human beings for human beings. What counts is the attitude which the human being adopts within the whole and not just the high-quality end product.

The open circle takes up and emits impulses. A biodynamic food organism has a positive effect on the environment and therefore on the joint future of mankind and the earth. You could say that it promotes the health of all living creatures. But no distinction is made between the health of human beings, plants, animals or the soil. It is about one health, one life. And it is about the common development with the earth.

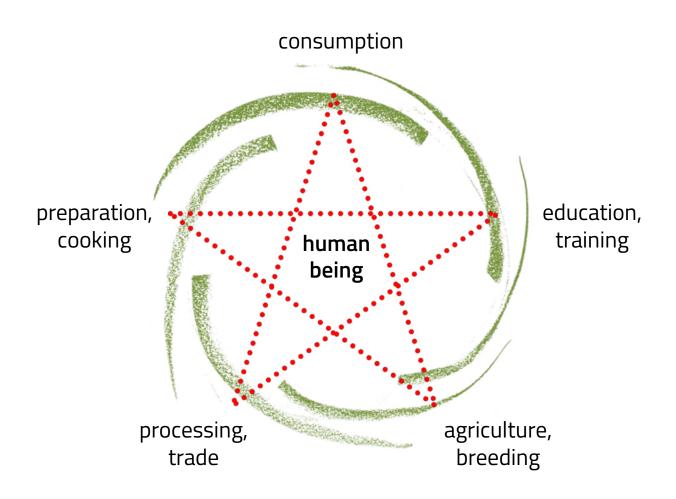


Fig.: Biodynamic food organism

From an anthroposophical viewpoint, an organism consists of members that are also active in each organ. There is a physical level: this refers to structures and equipment that are physically present. In the case of the processing and sales organs, it is the equipment and installations. Then there is the stream of life: this produces and transforms. This is the flow of goods between those involved. Products arise and are altered and used for a new creation. The third level represents the way in which the participants cooperate. What is meant here is the attitude to each other. And finally a living organism is subject to an idea, to which everything contributes in its way and which constitutes the unique element.

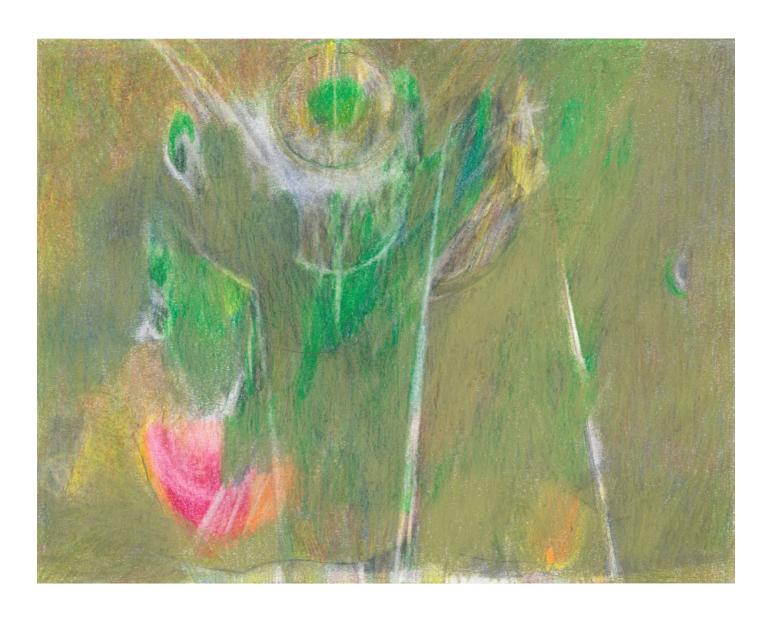
Nurturing relationships as a principle in the organism

Happiness is an active nurturing of relationships, according to Tho Ha Vinh, who founded the Eurasia Learning Institute for Happiness and Wellbeing. He describes happiness as a threefold relationship: first it is necessary to have a relationship to oneself. Next, relationships are nurtured with the social surroundings. If we widen the circle, we arrive at a good relationship with the whole earth.

So nurturing relationships is the basic requirement for a healthy, sustainable life on earth. This requires the development and nurturing of typical human abilities, such as interest, esteem and attentiveness towards oneself and all living creatures. With our cultural and creative forces, we can then become co-creators of harmony in the world. The earth can then develop sustainably and provide us human beings with the basis for life and opportunities for development. One fundamental ability is the ability to encounter the other. Our whole life revolves around encounter: when choosing food; in perceiving the food; when eating with pleasure; or in conversation with others or with oneself. Farmers also encounter their animals and observe how the seed develops.

The encounter is a process of entering into relationship: we turn with interest and empathy to the other and observe it. It is like a conversation from one heart to another. The American author, speaker and cultural philosopher, Charles Eisenstein has concluded that we have broken off our conversation with the life outside and inside ourselves. This has led to the crises in which humanity is trapped. Humanity has broken the link to all of creation. ¹³ Eisenstein sees the solution to this in the cultivation of the ability to love – and this is nothing other than an interested process of entering into a relationship: it is attentiveness and appreciation. In short, the reconnection can only go through the human heart.

We can develop and cultivate these abilities by means of exercises.



Exercises to strengthen our ability to form relationships

An ability can only be developed and fostered through practise. It is just like fitness training: it does not help to sit on the sofa and wait until the biceps grow – we have to train the muscles. They become stronger through gradually increasing the resistance. If they are not used, they atrophy. The senses are also activated and developed through stimulation. A perfumer has a good nose because they are constantly smelling and can perceive subtle differences. Training makes us strong, because it is an activity and therefore the exercise of our will.

Our senses are the organs that connect us to the world. Through them we create our relationship to the world. If the sense perception is conscious, then we are in relation to ourselves. Developing the senses means training the human organs, connecting to the world and forming relationships. This results in a strengthening of the connection to oneself as a prerequisite for the ability to connect to others.

The German brain scientist, Gerald Hüther says, "love of my neighbour, of the environment and the earth requires a love of myself". We know this principle from "Love your neighbour as yourself". It can be learned and must be learned if a healthy, sustainable development is to be possible. Connection and freedom are emotional needs just like hunger and thirst on the physical level. Both require to be satisfied.¹⁴

Connection arises from interested, judgement-free "looking". This corresponds to an attentive observation of the nature of the person or thing. It is not primarily about *what* it is or whether I like it. This "what are you?" comes from an open attention that gives rise to attentiveness characterised by devotion.

In what follows I will introduce some exercises that foster the capacity to build relationships. Just as the movement of a large piece of machinery starts with the movement of a small cog, so we can bring about the greatest impetus for a big change if we do the thing we can do best: start with ourselves. Let us cultivate the relationship to ourselves, develop attentive, interested encounters and decide in the best interests of all. This moves the cog that finally sets everything in motion.

It is not necessary to attempt large projects, but simple exercises that can be easily integrated into daily life. They start at different points, so that everyone can get involved, depending on their own preferences.

Eating mindfully: the three questions

The first individual step to enter into relationship is mindful eating: this trains the senses and expands perception. Empathy and interest develop. Mindful eating involves taking an interest in where the various foods come from and the conditions under which they were produced and traded. This cultivates relationship, partnership and respect – the key features of a healthy future.

Mindfulness as an attitude fosters a positive development of individual, social and economic relationships. This is why I introduce it as the first step for changing the system. We can start this at any time, without any preconditions and independently of whatever point in the value chain we find ourselves.

The three questions are a simple exercise that do not take up much space and can be practised daily anywhere. The questions are:

Before the meal: What is on my plate? During the meal: How does it taste?

After the meal: How do I digest and tolerate what I have just eaten?

Before the meal, reflect for a moment. Perhaps you can smell something? Looking at the plate, you then ask yourself: what is on my plate? Are there different colours? What shapes are there? How is the meal arranged? If you are in company, it is enough to take a quick, quiet moment just for yourself.

During the meal you consciously notice the flavour and smell and ask yourself how it tastes. You can also pay attention to the sensation in your mouth. This is different in the case of salad than with rice. This also requires only a short moment while eating with friends or family.

Some time **after the meal,** you observe whether the meal agrees with you and if it is easily digestible. A quick moment of recall is sufficient.

With time, the questions lead to a deepened experience that increases the pleasure of eating and strengthens the relationship to yourself. You get to know yourself better. But it is not just about personal enjoyment: interest in the origin and the production of the food is also aroused. We as consumers thus become co-producers through our food and our purchasing decisions. Perhaps as a result you also develop thankfulness.

Nutrition diary: getting to know your own eating behaviour

Keeping a nutrition diary is a method developed by nutrition therapy. Over a specific period, such as three to seven days, you note down everything that you eat and drink. This includes any little snacks between meals or the crisps and peanuts in the evening while watching TV. The aim is to raise awareness, not make a judgement. The first step to knowledge is always observation of the facts.

You should also note the time and type of meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner). Also record where you eat and with whom. It is very easy and only requires a bit of discipline and honesty.

The rules:

- » Be conscientious and honest.
- » Make your notes immediately after eating.
- » Be quick because the biscuit that you nibbled in the afternoon is usually long forgotten by evening.

Use the following form (Download <u>here</u>) as a guide. You can also use apps or other tools.

This exercise will help you to get to know yourself and you will develop an awareness about your own eating habits and preferences. You will find out what and how much you actually eat, rather than what you think you eat.

Nutrition Diary

Name:

| | | | | - |
|------|----------|------|-------|---------|
| time | quantity | food | drink | remarks |
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Date:

Page:___

Nutrition biography: a review

Sketching out your own nutrition biography is an exercise that can be done alone or with another person. It is particularly interesting when you do it with someone that you do not know very well. You could, for instance, use a meeting of your CSA for this. There is a need for a degree of closeness and confidentiality.

You tell the other person your biography with regard to food (or write it down, if you are doing the exercise alone). What did I eat in my childhood, as a teenager or during my student years, etc.? How did I eat – alone, at the kitchen table, with the family, in the canteen? Do I remember a particular smell or flavour? What was the mood at the table like? What were my preferences? Have these changed? Have my attitude or my values altered?

Each person gets about 20 minutes, then you change over. Be strict with keeping to time and give each other space. The person listening lends their ear and their empathetic attention, creates a listening space into which the other can speak or which attracts what wants to be said. There is enough time for this: you can reflect in peace and quiet and awaken the memories. Then the words start to flow. The person listening does not make any comments and only brief questions to clarify the meaning are permitted. It is important not to start a discussion. Another option is to do this while going for a walk.

This exercise gives rise to memories of the atmosphere at mealtimes, in the family, with your grandmother or in a group of work colleagues. Taste preferences or dislikes that may have changed become clear. Your own values in relation to food may become conscious. This can give rise to an inner relationship to your own socialisation in relation to food. Maybe light will dawn ...

Expanded sensory tasting: conscious sense perception

Expanded sensory tasting is based on sensory analysis. The exercise starts with the conscious sense perception of appearance (sense of sight), smell (sense of smell), taste (sense of taste) and mouthfeel (sense of touch). After the sensory perception, an inner response begins that is observed and recorded. It is a process of listening to what wants to appear. Through the conscious perception, this method also strengthens the relationship to yourself.

It is best to carry out the exercise in a group, because you can then exchange experiences and can categorise your own perception to a certain degree. Food samples are prepared and blinded so that the participants do not recognise them directly. Naturally you would see whether it is an apple or a carrot, milk or water, but the differences between the samples should not be known during the exercise. One way is to number the samples or give them letters.

The participants are given an evaluation form (see figure, Download here) and the samples. After a moment of reflection, they observe the samples in sequence, one parameter at a time and note their observations. This should be done in silence. Afterwards the group can discuss their observations. There is usually agreement on many of the observations. The inner response in particular is often an evidential experience for participants, through which they discover that the subjective perception has a certain objectivity.

Samples that are well suited to this are apple juice, carrots and yogurt of various qualities. Different methods of processing, for example of milk, can also be tasted.

Expanded sensory tasting

| | sample 1 | sample 2 | sample 3 |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Sensory | | | |
| appearance | | | |
| smell | | | |
| taste | | | |
| sense of touch, mouth feeling | | | |
| inner reaction | | | |
| inner feeling, picture, resonance | | | |



Fragrance and aroma painting: giving the perception shape and colour

Drawing scents or aromas involves smelling a plant, food or other sample or tasting the flavour, and expressing this in a picture. It is a method of transforming the sense perception into a conscious imagination. Using artistic expression allows an experience of the etheric qualities of substances. The method was developed under the name of Fragrance Painting by the researcher Torsten Arncken of the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum.

Normally with sense perceptions, we transform the perception into concepts. We smell aniseed seeds and identify the smell as aniseed. In so doing, we end the perception and have a result in the form of a word with a meaning. If, on the other hand, we try to produce a symbol, we immerse ourselves in the quality of what we experience. We deepen the experience and "feel" the forces, the movements and the relationships. They manifest as new impressions similar to feelings. Using our fantasy we create an appropriate colour and form from this in order to depict the quality we have experienced. This means that we activate our intention and our will.

When doing this exercise, it is best not to think too much. Once you have become accustomed to the process, you think less and less and increasingly choose a colour intuitively and let yourself be led by the smell or aroma when creating a form with it. We could say that it is the scent or aroma that paints the picture and we are the means for this to happen: we witness a living activity in ourselves.

The method has been described in detail and published at:

https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/nutrition/articles/sv/fragrance-and-aroma-painting



Fig.: Frangrance pictures of carrots of the same variety on the same field, but harvested at different times: in October (top) and November (bottom). There are similarities in the radiating upwards and outwards, but the complexity and ripeness (red colour) have clearly increased in the second picture.

Empathic food testing: How foods affect the way we feel

Uwe Geier, a biodynamic researcher who developed the method, writes: "All of us are aware of the effects of foods. What I am referring to are the effects that go deeper or last longer than the taste. The arousing, stimulating (to the point of nervousness) effect of coffee, for example, is an effect that is linked to caffeine. But tea also contains caffeine and wakens us up, but in a very different way to coffee. How can these differences be described? Or the relaxing, subduing effect of cream. With closer observation, effects like these can be clearly distinguished from repleteness, enjoyment or taste. And they can be discovered in all foods. This means that foods contain a hidden property that has scarcely been noticed until now: their effect on our emotional and physical condition." ¹⁵

Empathic food testing is a standardised method that has been scientifically developed. It is used to determine the effect of foods on our physical and emotional condition. In other words, we observe the effect that occurs after the taste. The taste perception is then overwritten. The measuring instrument is ourselves. Getting into the right frame of mind (body scan) before the exercise will prepare us for the observation.

If you are interested in this method, I recommend attending an introduction by a certified empathic food testing trainer. Contact details for trainers are publicly available. 16

After this you can practise alone or in a group with others. Practising in a group has the advantage that you can discuss your experiences. If others in the group describe a similar effect, this reinforces confidence in the assessment. During the exercise you can find out how a food affects you and whether it does you good, or the opposite. This increases your food competence. Strengthening the relationship to yourself and to your own nutrition is a requirement for a positive effect in the food organism.

Product tests are carried out by this method using trained panels or larger groups of laypeople after intensive preparation. What are referred to as body effect images are produced.

A body effect image from beetroot juice: tests were done with an organic sample (left) and a biodynamic sample (right). The more negative evaluations are red and the more positive ones green: the font size reflects the number of mentions. The location in the body image shows where the various sensations appeared. The organic sample invoked more negative sensations in the middle region with pressure, tightness and heaviness, but at the same time a bright uprightness, like the biodynamic sample. On the whole this latter had a positive effect almost everywhere. The main difference between the two samples appeared in the middle zone where the biodynamic sample evoked a widened chest and a calm, mild and comfortable warm feeling.



Body effect image

red beet juice

ORGANIC

BIODYNAMIC

head isolated (2)

upright/ bright (8)

vital/light (4)
pressure/
heavy/tight(10)

contracting (2)

tremulous/restless (2)

Warm (5)

weak (3)

firm stand (3)

head dull (2)

upright/ above open (7)

ready for activity (3)

chest expanded (7)
calm/mild
comfortable (7)

rather dark(2)

Warm (8)

cover (5)

firm stand (7)

body effect image: results of the free description. 9 trained observer. Frequency of term mentions in brackets. Characteristics that stand out in a sample are marked with stronger colours

Positive characteristics

■ Negative characteristics

The Calendar of the Soul: our conversation with the world through the seasons

In 1912, in his anthroposophical Calendar of the Soul, Rudolf Steiner composed a mantric verse for each week of the year.17 The verses relate to the seasons of the Northern Hemisphere and describe the relationship of the human soul to the world. The human being and the world are related to each other and need each other. The relationship between outer and inner life changes rhythmically and is very different depending on the season. In summertime the soul is wide open and immersed in the surroundings, in nature. "To summer's radiant heights The sun in shining majesty ascends; It takes my human feeling Into its own wide realms of space ..." and at the same time the feeling in us is addressed (week 10). And in the depths of winter, the soul withdraws completely back into the physical. The verse for week 36 says: "Within my being's depths there speaks, Intent on revelation, The cosmic Word mysteriously ..." In another place Rudolf Steiner says that at this season the earth is the most spiritual.

The close link of the human being with the world is described in the verse for week 33 in a way that indicates that, without human experience, the world would be only "frosty, empty life", in other words not alive, and "Would in itself find only death". Heart's warmth, heart forces and heart's world of love are mentioned as human qualities that characterise the relationship of human beings and the world. In verse 42 the sense-world revelation is linked to warmth of heart. This means that, if we do not meet the things of the world with devotion and empathy and perceive them attentively, we are not able to know them.

These verses can accompany us through the year, week by week, and the soul can experience the seasons in a new, deep quality. At first you may not be able to follow the meaning of some of the verses straight away. This does not matter, because it is not intellectual understanding that is required, but empathy. The verses and your own experience will be increasingly enriched if you live with the verses for a few years. It is a beautiful ritual to read the relevant weekly verse first thing in the morning, for example.



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