

Nutrition as Healing Substances

By Irmhild Kleinhenz

Each individual human organ has a specific capacity to receive soul/spiritual impulses. Nutritional substances contain the supersensible influences of the Earth and the Universe. Through the entire digestive process, these external formative forces are internalized, assimilated and transformed into human spiritual activity. The gesture (gestalt) of the nutritional substance gives us an external impression of the quality of these supersensible forces and if we can develop a deeper understanding of this gesture, then we will be able to sense into what substance is needed for a specific spiritual activity. The human metabolism is in a constant state of flux between anabolism and catabolism, assimilation and dissimilation, oxidation and reduction, inflammation and sclerosis. The involvement of the Ego organization in this dynamic is to constantly overcome one-sidedness. As the Ego organization confronts the foreign etheric formative forces or astrality contained within the food, these are destroyed and set free thereby stimulating the human etheric body to build up new individualized formative forces. In human beings this digestive process is far more delicate than in animals, (who have a greater tolerance for foreign substances); human digestion only matures gradually and requires a complex process of assimilation. Carbohydrates are broken down into sugars, fats into fatty acids and proteins into amino acids through the

interaction of the astral body (enzymes and micro-organisms) and the etheric body, which are guided by the ego organization. Mechanical chewing in the mouth is vital to the proper development of the human will and if this is inefficient in childhood then digestive disorders will arise later on in adult life. In the stomach, the astral body engages with the production of acid to break down proteins and in the small intestine the pH becomes more alkaline, indicating the engagement of the etheric body. In the large intestine the Ego organization becomes active again in the process of externalising and eliminating digested matter.

Breastfeeding

Infants have a very delicate digestive system and can only gradually tolerate earthly substances. Breast milk places less demand upon the immature organs and allows the child to incarnate more gradually. As the digestive system begins to mature, heralded by the first teeth erupting, the child can begin to eat more earthly foods, beginning with the fruit and flower, seed and grain parts of plants and only then moving down to introducing leaf and finally root. Plants are by far the first nutrition and only very much later, with the eruption of the second teeth, can the digestive system tolerate animal protein. The exception is soured milk products, which have undergone a natural fermentation digestive process. Extended

breastfeeding has gained much popularity in recent years. It is important to understand the incarnation process in a child in order to determine when to wean appropriately. The first teeth are an indication that the child is incarnating more fully and that it is time to begin to develop individual capacities to deal with earthly conditions effectively. Gradual weaning is



now indicated and the mother must begin to separate her emotional relationship with the child. It is often the case that she will begin to menstruate again around this time and after this is re-established the quality and quantity of breast milk begins to decline naturally. If this is not the case or menstruation begins too early or is delayed, then this is a health issue that requires professional support. Extended breastfeeding carries the risk of the child remaining too strongly attached to the astral body of the mother and thus incapable of developing emotional resilience for social relationships later on. Often these children suffer from separation anxiety or sibling rivalry. It is important that we understand the Pedagogical Law if we are to support the healthy incarnation of the child. Another aspect of extended breastfeeding is that the digestive enzymes required to assimilate substances fully are not stimulated sufficiently and hence the child is more likely to develop food allergies, especially if there is a family history of allergies. The mother's digestive processes dominate until the child is weaned.

Allergies

Biodynamic food is superior to any other food and we must understand this not from necessarily analyzing the nutritional content of every food in a materialistic way, but rather to see the bigger picture. Biodynamic produce carries the ethos and healing impulses of the whole universe. Building up an intimate relationship to the intrinsic nature of every food substance means that we develop a spiritual bond with it and as a result our digestion responds in a balanced and healthy way. This means that allergies to food are not to be blamed on the food itself but

on the impulses it carries from its growth and care to the response we experience within us when we eat it with reverence. Allergies can also arise from stress. The child must learn to "digest" all external impressions encountered during life and we must also be careful not to place too much of a burden upon this digestive maturation too soon or inappropriately. There is always a fine line between protecting the child from external stress and building up resilience to these forces. This depends much upon the constitution and the temperament of the child, which we must assess with an unbiased mind. Adults must firstly develop spiritual insights into how external impressions such as inappropriate nutrition, drugs, immunization, pollution etc... lead to hardening and deterioration of health.

The three fold human being

The plant is an image that relates to the human being in a reverse picture. Roots contain structuring and hardening forces, but also vitality and mineral salts. These are important for the development of the nervous system. The polar opposite of the roots is the flower and fruit, which contain loosening and reproductive forces, important for the development of the metabolic system. Potatoes are tubers and are heavily permeated with earthly gravitational forces that lead to one-sided abstract thinking.

The four fold human being

Food substances deteriorate easily: protein begins to rot, fats become rancid, carbohydrates ferment and parasites/micro-organisms proliferate. Within the human body the four members are constantly active

to overcome these tendencies. The etheric body fights against putrefaction, the astral body against fat decomposition and the ego organisation against fermentation. Specific homeopathic substances can be given for each of these members to assist them in the process. It is also common for children to have parasites due to being less incarnated and therefore not as competent in enzyme secretions, especially those of the gall bladder with its bitter astral and ego forces that encourage a deeper engagement into the digestion.

1. Carbohydrates

have a threefold nature, lactose and galactose being important for the nerves, maltose and glucose for the rhythmic system and sucrose and fructose for the metabolic system. Diabetics more easily tolerate fructose because it contains a greater warmth process important for supporting the ego organisation's action in the metabolism.

Diabetes is a failure of the ego organization to cope with high levels of stress, especially intellectual stress. Sugar is needed by the Ego to remain incarnated in a healthy dynamic. Hyperglycaemia results from the Ego falling into egotism and Hypoglycaemia from abandoning the earthly connection.

Grains

The seven archetypal grains are related to the seven planetary processes and follow the weekly rhythm that belongs to the rhythm of the astral body. To understand each grain in relation to its planetary connection requires a deeper study of the gesture of each grain so that we do not fall into an arbitrary dogma. I can only give a short version of these substance signatures but I would encourage you to resource these further.

Wheat belongs to the grasses, Gramineae family. It has a slender hollow stem and spikelets, it changes from green to gold as it ripens and grows in a temperate climate where the Sun maintains a balanced relationship to the Earth. It provides the heart with the forces of adaptability, diversity and cosmopolitan relationships.

Rice (*Oryza sativa*) grows in a warm watery realm, has a hollow jointed stem and tastes sweet. It follows the Moon rhythm that remains bound to a sleepy consciousness within the liver's etheric body activity that influences the Moon process in the reproductive system.

Barley is another grass and grows in good soils and where there is plenty of light. It is the first grain to germinate and can tolerate variations of climate. It is rich in silica and sugars both necessary for sugar metabolism and the stimulation of the gallbladder, the fiery Mars impulse within the digestive system that brings alertness and activity.

Millet has strong roots, flower clusters, small rounded seeds, a high silica content and is alkaline. It swells when cooked and tastes bland. It grows in Africa where it is the main grain that is cooked, a region where the Earth "breathes in and out" filled with Mercurial life and vitality.

Rye (*Secale cereale*) is a cool, light and airy plant with strong roots that can loosen hard soil. It opens itself up for pollination, embracing the Jupiter forces of growth and is then spread by the

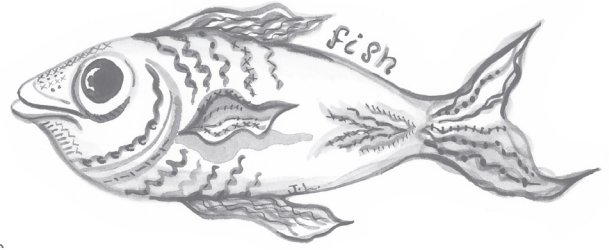
wind to disseminate its paired seed spikes. It has a sharp taste that stimulates the liver and carbohydrate metabolism.

Oats (*Avena sativa*) has many branches, florets that tend to hang and are feather like, it grows in temperate climates near the sea, tastes sweet, absorbs water and is quite resilient. Its Venus impulse stimulates the kidneys to guide the astral impulses into the digestion where they have a loosening and strengthening effect that supports calming the mind.

Maize (*Zea mays*) is a tall, strong, narrow and solid plant that requires warmth and does not tolerate cold and wet conditions. It has a thickened axis and ears that contain longitudinal rows of yellow-orange coloured grains that taste sweet. These ears are sheathed and surrounded within by silken fibres that reveal a mysterious internalized Saturnian process associated with the spleen.

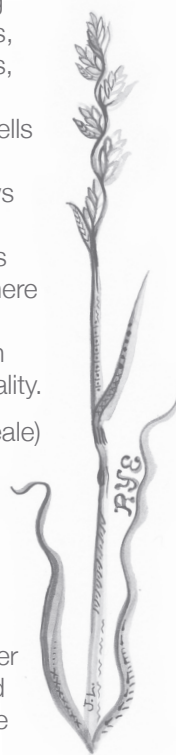
2. Fats

crave oxygen and are the vehicle for warmth. Here the astral body is able to engage with the ego organization through the relationship between the thyroid gland and the adrenal glands. If the astral body is diverted from this task then it is too weak and the result is Obesity, on the other hand, if it acts too strongly and internalizes itself, it will lead to Emaciation.



There is much to say about Omegas and essential fatty acids these days and most people already know everything about fish oils. Again we must look at the facts from a spiritual perspective and not only the materialistic angle. We must consider the life and being of the fish and its destiny with the human being. In short we must think about how the fish stores its warmth in comparison to other animals and to plants. These are very different depending on the external environment. Choosing an oil or a fat is very much dependent upon the temperament of the individual and their need for specific warmth and where this is required the most in the physical body. What kind of warmth does the brain need in comparison to the heart and lungs or the liver or kidneys? Does the individual need warmth of thinking, feeling or willing?

Cholesterol is also very topical and poorly understood from a materialistic scientific viewpoint. It is essential for the brain and its highest concentration is in the adrenal glands, where it is required for the production of androgens, such as progesterone, oestrogen and testosterone among others. These hormones mediate the astral body impulses from the brain. The cholesterol pathway is through the liver and involves the activity of the astral body in the gall bladder secretions which act as emulsifiers. If this process is inhibited or too weak then gallstones arise along with other premature hardening forces.



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The regulation of cholesterol is therefore not dietary but actually digestive orientated. Another important process involves the interaction and production of vitamin D out of the cholesterol process stimulated by the absorption of light through the skin. We need to reconsider the relationship of the brain and the adrenals if we wish to fully understand the cholesterol myth. High levels of stress cause the adrenals to become exhausted and contribute to the increase of cholesterol in the body. Another indication of this is the increase of cholesterol after Menopause or as the sex hormones diminish and the metabolism slows down.

3. Protein

is the universal vehicle of life (DNA) and follows the laws of the etheric body. The pancreas is a key organ in protein, fat and carbohydrate metabolism. It is a type of glandular brain and as such expresses the way in which we face food and the world. It allows us to incarnate into the metabolism with the will. This activity is in two directions, the catabolic process that proceeds from the pancreas to the ego organization through the engagement of warmth and then the anabolic process that links with the etheric body to provide building up forces in the four major organs and consequently builds up a "new body".

Soybeans

contains nitrogen-fixing bacteria in its root system, which have an overall suffocative effect upon the plant. This legume is filled with the dark and damp earthly gravitational forces that lead to compulsive materialistic

thoughts. Along with this, these forces cause the blood and body fluids to coagulate. It is also not at all desirable for children to consume phytoestrogens, as they may disturb the hormonal growth forces in the developing child and possibly lead to precocious puberty (development of secondary sex characteristics). It is a necessity for the metabolism to completely annihilate the substance that is consumed.

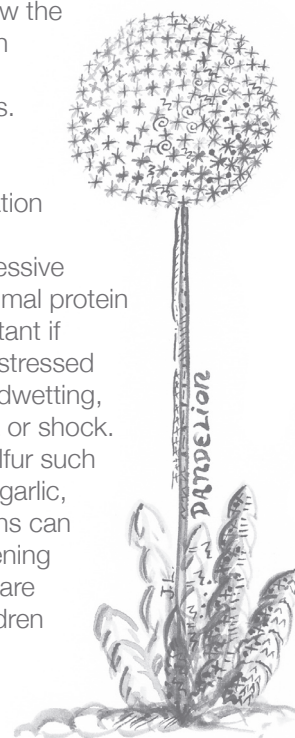
Hence, we could say that this destructive force is somewhat lacking and not inwardly directed in hypersensitive individuals, who struggle to incarnate into the earthly sphere and really wish to linger almost fully in the cosmos where confrontation does not really exist. In these times, the world in which we are incarnated is stressful and filled with huge challenges that are difficult to cope with and so we see many young people who are extremely vulnerable and overwhelmed by the restless and threatening environment. Clearly, those who promote the consumption of soymilk have already succumbed to materialistic one-sided "bean-thinking".

4. Light.

It is interesting to think about light as a nutritional substance, but if we are to understand this clairvoyantly, then it becomes clear that all substances contain a source of light from the Sun, which allows life to unfold on the Earth. In plants this light is taken in through photosynthesis to create chlorophyll, rich in magnesium and vital for the function of the etheric body. In the blood, on the other hand, iron dominates to give it its red

colour and provides a vehicle for oxygen. Both chlorophyll and blood have the same porphyrin framework that is light sensitive. Magnesium internalizes light, (anabolic activity) and Iron releases it, (catabolic activity). Here we have the metamorphosis of light with light and darkness as polarities and the middle realm occupied by the light bearer, Phosphorus.

Raw foods have a stimulating effect upon the body and if eaten in excess can lead to increased inflammatory changes as a result of too great a load upon the metabolism with the ego organization caught in this polarity, unable to unfold its spiritual capacities. The reverse is true for excessively cooked or denatured foods, which lead to premature hardening and the inability for the ego organization to engage fully. We need to consider what preservatives and microwave cooking do to the food and how the Ego organization may respond to these challenges. Raw foods are important when there is suppuration such as acne or abscesses, excessive catarrh. Low animal protein foods are important if the kidneys are stressed such as with bedwetting, cystitis, candida or shock. Foods rich in sulfur such as horseradish, garlic, ginger and onions can overcome hardening tendencies and are indicated in children who have been intellectually overburdened.



Bitter substances such as chicory, dandelion, lemon, grapefruit, cumquat, paw paw etc.. can overcome inflammatory conditions and are indicated in children who are poorly incarnated.

Why do we become sick?

“Through the intake of food, external substances are absorbed through the mouth and the intestinal passages into some part of the body. Now, you must understand that the human organization immediately rebels against these nutritional

substances; it does not tolerate them in their original forms and destroys them. Food substances must actually be disintegrated. In fact, they are annihilated, and this begins in the mouth. The reason for this is that there is continuous, never-ceasing activity in our body. This activity must be observed.... Ordinary science simply records how a piece of bread is eaten, dissolved in the mouth, and then distributed in the body, but we must also take into consideration that the human body is continually active.... Now the dissolved and transformed food substances are constantly

being transmitted through the blood vessels to the inner organs, and the nourishment that goes into the lungs is completely different from what goes to the spleen. The astral body is much smarter than the human being... it can distinguish ... The astral body, however, can become stupid - not as stupid as the human being can become, but stupid in comparison to its own cleverness.... It will no longer properly sort out the food substances and transmit them to the appropriate organs; it will do this clumsily instead.

... They are deposited somewhere else in the body.”

Reference - Rudolf Steiner: Lectures to the Workers - Chapter IX.

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Greetings from the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America!

I am the current Publications Managing Editor for WECAN and would like to make a relationship with our sister organizations in other English-speaking countries. I hope to inform more people about the wonderful new books that we have been able to make available to teachers and parents, through a generous grant program from the Waldorf Curriculum Fund. Some recent and upcoming publications are:

You're Not the Boss of Me! Understanding the 6/7-year-old transformation
a great resource for everyone who knows a 6 year old!

Childhood's Garden

by Helle Heckmann, a full color booklet with a 1-hour DVD of a day in Nokken (Helle's program for children from 1 to 7 in Copenhagen)

A Warm and Gentle Welcome: Nurturing Children from Birth to Age Three
from the WECAN Birth-to-Three working group, a wealth of research and reflection

Creating a Home for Body, Soul, and Spirit

a book by Bernadette Raichle, written out of her 25 years of experience at Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten in New Zealand

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