

Introduction

Those who begin to think about the food they eat will soon find that there are endless contradictions in this field, more than in any other field of science. It is true, for example, that in civilized countries food is more than abundant in peacetime. Many people therefore believe that our nutrition is better than it has ever been. Others, however, will insist that this only refers to quantity, and that the quality of our food is worse today than it has ever been. Therefore, they say, we should go back to humanity's original nutrition. But what was that nutrition? Some say it was meat, others bread. And what meat and what kind of bread? Some people feel it is self-evident that the only real bread is whole grain bread. Others will actually warn against it and advise eating only white bread, because it does not cause problems with the digestion. Others again advocate life completely without bread or any other grain.

Many people are convinced that only a raw food diet is a healthy diet. After all, they say, animals do not boil or fry their food. Other people will argue that cooking makes the food more digestible and that raw foods are not easily digested. Opposing views are also held on what kind of fat to use. Which is better and which is best avoided—butter or margarine? Opinions continue to clash unabated on many other subjects. It would be easy to give further examples of this kind. The question is, who is right?

Modern people want proof. The situation is difficult, however, because every proponent of an opposite view provides 'proof,' often from personal experience. They say they were sick for years until they changed their nutrition. Since then they have been well. The inevitable conclusion is that if everyone were to eat the way *they* do, all would

be well. There is no reason to doubt people's personal experience, but the question is whether others will react in the same way.

There have of course been scientific investigations in the field of nutrition. It has been carefully established how many calories a person needs, how much vitamins, protein, fat, etc. It is important, however, to realize that these investigations can never come to an end. Something 'new' always comes along, which immediately spreads around the world, leaving the 'old' views completely 'out of date.'

When scientific investigation first started, for instance, it was established that only the *starchy* part of grains provides nourishment. The marginal layers cannot be digested and were therefore considered useless roughage. Today, the view is that such roughage is absolutely essential for good digestion. Another example is that just a few years ago, only vegetable fats were considered to be healthy. It was said that all animal fats should be eliminated as far as possible. Since then we have learned that fats from coldwater sea fish such as mackerel have valuable properties and can help to prevent heart attacks. These fish oils are definitely not vegetable fats. And then we often hear that people need specific 'essential amino acids' that are found only in meat, and a vegetarian diet is therefore not sufficient. On the other hand, numerous investigations have shown that vegetarians do not suffer from any deficiencies whatsoever and are undoubtedly healthier in the long run. This is not to say that the scientific findings are wrong! They are, however, often only theoretical or one-sided, and are influenced by other factors that are not so easily grasped in scientific studies.

So what should we do? Try every suggestion? Leave out anything that may be 'questionable?' Mark Twain (1835-1910), the American humorist, already knew about this dilemma. He once wrote that the safest food is water—taken in moderate amounts. Even this is not always true today.

Drinking water is barely drinkable in many places because excessive amounts of chlorine have been added, pesticides or agricultural fertilizers have drained into it, or it has already ‘passed’ through many people or also through industry. So it is not an absolutely ‘safe’ food anymore. Even the water ‘treatments’ used today have their problems. They may remove most of the toxic substances, but they cannot restore the water to its original purpose as the irreplaceable carrier of life.

People who live in arid regions of the world know this very well—without water there is no life. The question is whether the maltreated water available to many people as their only drinking water really can still carry life, compared to fresh spring water. Even the rain falling from the skies has its problems today, as we know from ‘acid rain.’

How is anyone to understand all these opposing views and come to an independent judgment? Success stories and scientific findings may be perfectly correct and still miss the point.

These contradictions point to a fundamental problem in today’s life. Masses of details are known, we are able to measure and change them, but we fail to recognize the essence of the thing—it is often not even seen. When it comes to nutrition, the essential question is: Why do we need to eat at all? Why do people die if they have no food? Why can we not live only on water, salt, stones or wood?

People had the right instinct in the past when they called food the ‘mediator of life’ (German *Lebensmittel*), for it is life that we take in through eating. Stones, wood, or also salt evidently have no life in them, and this is why human beings cannot get life from eating them. Of course there are some exceptions: woodworms, for example, can live on wood; for them wood is a mediator of life, but not for people. So we arrive at a basic principle:

Only what contains life can nourish life.

This may be new to modern people, but it is an old idea. Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) wrote:

<p>The bread is not our food; what feeds us in the bread is God's eternal word, is spirit and is life.</p>	<p><i>Das Brot ernährt uns nicht; was uns im Brote speist ist Gottes ewiges Wort,* ist Leben und ist Geist.</i></p>
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What Angelus Silesius meant is that it is not the physical substance as such which feeds us but its 'content.' It is the force of life that matters—life and spirit.

It must sound truly heretical to modern people to say that we eat God's word and spirit when we eat bread. Do people today know what 'life' or 'spirit' actually are? Those four lines hold more wisdom than the many details we know today. Up to our 'modern' age, everybody knew that food is a gift from God and that it is a sin to simply throw it away. Today this happens with tons of food. Leftovers and waste in the past used to be fed to the pigs or made into compost. They would never have been 'taken off the market'—today's euphemism for the mass destruction of food.

As scientific investigations progressed, the focus was no longer put on life as a force, but on the physical substances. Yet these are only the 'packaging,' for life is not a substance. It is a force, and can only be bound up with certain substances.

As people lost sight of what life really is, they changed their word for 'food' from 'mediator of life' to 'mediator of nourishment' (German *Nahrungsmittel*). There is some justification for this, for not everything we eat contains life. Salt, for instance, does not serve life but higher purposes, as we shall see (see page 47). Roughage, which is really indigestible, also does not contain life and therefore does not nourish us. It does, however, serve the vital functions.

A third group is made up of the stimulants (the German word for these is *Genussmittel*, literally 'mediators of

* It is possible that originally the verse had 'light' instead of 'word' here, but that the more common expression 'God's word' seemed more fitting at the time. However, 'light' is clearly more apt. (Author's note) The German word *nicht* ('not') would rhyme with *Licht* ('light'), but does not rhyme with *Wort* ('word'). *Ed.*

pleasure'), which do not feed us nor help the vital functions. They are only for pleasure, and almost always have a destructive effect on life. The most widely used stimulants are coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, and sugar.

Thus, it is *life* that we receive from food. People think today that one cannot really grasp life itself as a force. This is why the declarations on packaging will tell us how many calories are contained in, say, 100 ml of milk. The number of calories tells us how much heat is produced by burning 100 grams of a specific substance. (The more recent term 'joule' is just a different unit of measurement.) This is why we read of the 'calories' or 'energy content' of a food. Useful to a degree, this nevertheless misses the real point. These are terms that are used in the field of technology and have their justification only there. With foods, however, it is not the calories that matter but the life they contain. Gasoline or wax, paraffin and so on, have a very high energy content—high 'calorific value'—but this does not make them food. Listing the amounts of carbohydrate, fat, protein, minerals, vitamins, etc. is a poor solution that does not tell us much, because it does not grasp the essence: life.

Which food has plentiful life in it? Life cannot be measured the way we measure calories. We must therefore start from life itself.

An unborn baby gets its life from its mother. Once it is born, its mother still provides it with milk, which is the ideal form of food for it. From the age of about six months, fruit, grains, cow's milk, and so on are gradually introduced, all of them containing life. Where does the cow get its life from? From its own food, plants, because cows are strict vegetarians. It is very interesting to note that from earliest times people have almost exclusively eaten meat from animals that are not carnivores. We may wonder why. Cows obtain their life from plants; cats, however, obtain their life from mice which themselves are vegetarian. To

understand this we have to know that only plants are really able to produce *new* life. Animals get their life from plants. By eating meat from an animal, we take in the animal's life directly, but it comes indirectly from plants. This means that the life which is in an animal is already 'second-hand,' as we might put it today. An animal does not have its life from itself but takes it from the plant, which in turn gets its life from the light of the sun. And 'God's spirit' is in the sun's light, as people knew in earlier times. Life in a plant is much more concentrated. This life is transformed inside an animal, and so becomes available to the animal as *inner* light, as consciousness. Life itself is consumed. If we were to eat the meat of an animal which lives on animals, we would still have food, nourishment, but hardly any more life, because life which originally comes from the sun's light has been gradually reduced in the passage from light → plant → animal → animal → human. This is no theory but has real practical significance. The only possible conclusion must be that a vegetable diet has the greatest vitality.

The graph on the following page shows that even the degree of consciousness of the animal influences the quantity of life in its meat. It shows the amount of food (vegetable substance) in kilograms that a vegetarian animal needs in order to produce one kilogram of meat. Thus, it takes about 9.5 kg of grain to produce 1 kg of beef, but only about 2 kg of grain for 1 kg of chicken. The more consciousness an animal unfolds, the more life is destroyed at the same time. These data are highly informative with regard to feeding the world. If the areas of land needed to grow food for cattle and pigs—both of them bred for food—were instead used to grow grain and vegetables for human consumption, there should be enough to feed the whole world.

Generally speaking, vegetables thus contain considerably more life than meat. The latter does, however, have its own role and justification, and this will be fully discussed later.

We have seen that a plant gets its life from light. It should be possible to free this light again. And this is in fact the case. If one burns a dried plant, then the sun's light and warmth that were in the plant reappear in the fire. Therefore, only formerly alive things that contain light and warmth can be burned. One cannot burn rocks, whereas petroleum can be burnt because it was once alive.

This is not only true in outer nature, but also within animals and human beings. Foods we eat are burned or oxidized in the body, and the warmth that we feel directly comes out of them again. Light now reappears as *inner* light, as consciousness. In the process life is diminished. It is 'consumed,' as we mentioned earlier, and transformed into inner light: into consciousness.

Quantity Fed to Produce One Kilogram of Meat

(kg vegetable substance fed per kg meat)

