



Section for Agriculture
Sektion für Landwirtschaft
Section d'Agriculture
Sección de Agricultura

Finding the Spirit in Agriculture

Report from the Agriculture Conference

at the Goetheanum in Dornach/Switzerland 2020

Contents

Rudolf Steiner, a hundred years ahead of his time <i>André Leu</i>	4
How biodynamic agriculture changed my life <i>Nasari Chavan</i>	5
How can I be open to the essence? <i>Ute Kirchgaesser</i>	7
The agricultural individuality: a new quality of time and work <i>Henri Murto</i>	9
We need a knowledge of that what is in becoming <i>Constanza Kaliks</i>	11
Michael Letter – In search of the spiritual in nature and landscape: art as a guide <i>Jean-Michel Florin</i>	13
The meaning of the sun for the being of the earth <i>Anna Cecilia Grün</i>	16
From the sensory to the spirit – experiences from formative forces research <i>Dorian Schmidt, Uli Johannes Koenig, Christina Henatsch</i>	18
Knowledge of nature and self-knowledge in farming life <i>Christof Klemmer</i>	19
Spirit and tradition: acknowledging nature as a mother	21
Heaven on Earth <i>Hans-Christian Zehnter</i>	22
Wool is a natural skin <i>Claudy Jongstra</i>	25
Awakening the heart of agriculture <i>Thea Maria Carlson</i>	27
Biodynamic agriculture and its partners: Building bridges in eventful times <i>Dan McKanan</i>	30
Theme of the year 2020/21 Breathing with the Climate Crisis ecologically – socially – spiritually	31

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Finding the spirit in agriculture

The worldwide biodynamic movement is now facing very real challenges: climate change, loss of biodiversity, plant diseases, etc. – and now the Corona crisis as well. This movement is meeting to discuss the theme of the "Spirit in Agriculture" – is this sensible? Are there not more pressing questions? We were curious to see how many people would in fact come to this year's conference. But this topic in fact turned out to be so popular worldwide that over 900 people came. What were they looking for? What was it they hungered and thirsted for?

The spirit moves where it will! It seems as though it wanted to move at the Goetheanum in this first week of February 2020. This conference had a special quality within the series of annual agricultural conferences. On the one hand it was like a ripe fruit and on the other like a new beginning: a ripe fruit that could be felt in the authority and self-assurance of the many speakers, and a new beginning, because much of a private nature in relation to the spirit – not previously so easily expressed in front of a large audience – was presented very individually and with complete authenticity.

Today it feels as though this conference was long ago. For many people all over the world, the strange period of the Corona crisis has created a dramatic break, often with devastating consequences but also some positives – such as a return to the essentials like food, nature and looking inwards. For many farmers it has been a time in which the connection to their own farm, business or garden and also to local customers has been intensified but also severely tested. This is a great privilege in comparison to many people who have to go looking for food in order to survive, such as in South America.

When I look back at these three strange months, I see the conference in a new light. It was like a gift to help us through the times to come, in that through workshops, keynote speeches, encounters and art we worked together to approach the essence, the spiritual. And the current situation shows us the reality of the urgency and necessity of a "spiritual revolution", as Dan McKanan called it in his talk, from which I would like to pick out two aspects here. The spiritual dimension of reality does not remove us from life, but it is the necessary complement to the sensory dimension which is needed in order to encounter the essence. This encounter is the basis of a cooperative attitude towards the living beings, plants, animals and the agricultural enterprises.

The conference closed with moving contributions about the situation and circumstances of people working in agriculture. An example from the USA demonstrated the inequality between white farmers and coloured farm workers. The biodynamic movement has the potential to act to change the worldwide inequalities by forming alliances with other like-minded movements.

This report contains a selection of topics from the conference in a condensed form. Today, due to the Corona crisis, we are living in uncertain times, including financially. We have therefore kept the costs of this publication lower than usual. The electronic version is in colour and the printed version is black and white inside. We ask for your understanding in this matter. Please draw the attention of your colleagues to this publication. We wish you good inspiration for your future work.

Jean-Michel Florin
Head of the Section for Agriculture

Rudolf Steiner, a hundred years ahead of his time

André Leu



André Leu, the Australian farmer and former head of the IFOAM world organisation for organic farming, gave a striking description of how his path had brought him to biodynamic agriculture and how he discovered that in many ways Rudolf Steiner was a hundred years ahead of his time.

I believe the title of this conference "Finding the spirit in agriculture" is very important: industrial agriculture has entirely forgotten the spirit and destroyed the planet. But an agriculture with spirit is needed for the future of the earth and human beings.

When I was 17 I was unhappy with school and went to the western tropical area of Australia. I came across a farm overflowing with flowers, plants, animals and fruit – I had never seen anything so wonderful before. I felt as though I was walking through the Garden of Eden. This was one of the first biodynamic farms in Australia. Then I knew what I wanted to do with my life: I started with biodynamic agriculture – something that is not so easy, as you know.

I am always amazed how many biodynamic farmers have not read Rudolf Steiner's "Agricultural Course" because they say it is too difficult. I do not see it as a book that you read from start to finish. It is a book that you have to meditate on: everyone needs to find those aspects that are important to them. I would like to mention some of the basic principles that I find important.

Everything is connected by complex networks of energy and consciousness.

Every agricultural enterprise is an individuality.

Rudolf Steiner said that his lectures were only a start, a basis for developing and spiritually renewing agriculture.

There is a difference between Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science which has a lot to do with energy, consciousness and spirituality, and the reductionist, Cartesian science which remains totally materialistic. The preparations come from spiritual science that shows how we can bring cosmic energy into agriculture. I believe that stirring the preparations is also a form of meditation, because it is important to do the stirring yourself. I now even stir my

coffee this way! It is fascinating to create the vortex and see the chaos!

And I find it fascinating nowadays that Cartesian reductionism shows that Rudolf Steiner was right 100 years ago. His statement that human beings can use their consciousness to perceive, understand and influence the invisible spiritual dimensions of the universe has now been scientifically confirmed. A study has shown that we can change matter and energy with our consciousness and, in addition, that the results are better when we meditate.* Consciousness is linked to neuronal networks. As shown by Kirlian photographs, these neuronal networks are to be found everywhere in the world, in plants, in hands, etc.

There is consciousness everywhere in nature. Our consciousness is greater than our body and not necessarily connected to it. This is borne out by thousands of descriptions of near-death experiences when the body and brain were dead. I also had an experience like this when I was young. A wonderful, peaceful feeling! My parents' grief led me to reincarnate into my body. But materialism cannot explain consciousness. So you can understand why our spirit, the way that we do something, has such an important effect. The energy is not just in the body but also outside it in the aura.

Scientists have now discovered that even plants have a type of consciousness. They have neurotransmitters and use their vessels to pass on information. They do not need a brain as their whole body is a neuronal network. It is interesting for farmers to know that all plants are connected by fungi (mycorrhizae) and roots. They can "smell", make decisions and also learn. So we are dealing with more than simply chemical elements, we are dealing with intelligence, a consciousness in the soil – our forests and farms are conscious intelligent super-organisms.

Let us go to the next level. Rudolf Steiner also said that the energy of the planets and stars also affects the objects and events on the earth. Science has also discovered fascinating phenomena about this. For example, the high-energy filaments (Birkeland Currents) connect the planets and stars to form a cosmic neuronal network.

* Dean I. Radin, Roger D. Nelson: *Evidence for Consciousness-Related Anomalies in Random Physical Systems*. In: *Foundations of Physics*, Vol. 19, No. 12, 1989

There are spirals and vortices in the cosmos, exactly as Rudolf Steiner described. New stars are created in the chaos. When we stir the preparations, we also create chaos so that something new can arise. The same forces are at work on each level – everything is connected.

As a farmer I believe that Rudolf Steiner's lectures form the start of a truly holistic, evolving agriculture. He wanted these lectures to open our consciousness so that,

along with the practical experiences, we could improve agricultural systems. How can we take Rudolf Steiner's ideas into the 21st century? He gives us the courage to develop our spirit to a higher perception, so that we can understand and influence the spiritual realms of the universe. We must develop a heart consciousness – the Agricultural Course is a good tool that he placed in our hands for this.

How biodynamic agriculture changed my life

Nasari Chavan

Nasari Chavan, who grew up in very poor circumstances in a small tribal village in India, shows how biodynamic agriculture is bringing new prospects for daily life, health and the social life in her homeland and how biodynamics can provide people with spiritual strength.

Namasté. I come from a small and humble tribal village in the large state of Maharashtra in India. Our community speaks a local dialect. Being part of a tribal village means that we live differently from the rest of the population of India. Our life is based on working in the forest. We cultivate a strong sense of community. India has 546 communities like mine. We are vegetarians and have a very close relationship to nature and to animals. We are a family of nine brothers and sisters and live with around 200 other families in our village. Most of the families in the village work as farmers on a small plot of land with four to six animals: buffalo, cows, goats, hens, etc. The concept of biodynamics is very close to my own beliefs.

I noticed when I was still very young that, as a tribal girl, I was living on the margin of society in India. To escape



this situation, when I was eight I decided to go to school. But there was no school in my village and in the school in the neighbouring village, which is not a tribal village, they spoke a language that I did not know. So I learned this language and went to this primary school. Afterwards I had to walk 24 kilometres every day to be able to go to the secondary school further away.

When I was 14 my father – who was the only person working on the farm – became very ill. So I decided to work on the farm to keep on cultivating the fields, be-



cause I was the only person able to do this. The practical farm work, selling the products at market, all this gave me new confidence. In my free time I tried to interest the other children in our village in going to school. And I got involved in social tasks, such as making women aware of child health and hygiene, etc.

In 2010 a local development officer told us about a new government programme on agricultural diversification and biodynamic agriculture. I was very interested in taking part: it was the first time that we had heard of biodynamics in my village. I did this training and wanted to convince my father to farm part of our farm biodynamically. I was keen for the other farmers to join in, but they did not believe that such small amounts of preparations and CCP could have an effect. They waited to see if the crops would actually fail. I was worried that the project would be taken away from the village if the others did not want to join in. So I tried to motivate the other farmers about biodynamic agriculture. We trained the farmers along with advisers from SARG (SUPA Agricultural Research Group). So 100 families in the village started working biodynamically on around 300 morgens (approximately 600 acres) of land. We grew a local type of cotton in mixed cultures with beans and chickpeas and at the end of the year achieved good yields. In addition, production costs were much lower (for compost, CPP, etc.) than with conventional agriculture. The final assessment was very convincing: soil fertility had improved and the oxen had less difficulty ploughing. After three years of the regular application of biodynamic preparations,

CPP and compost, we could see that the soil absorbed more water, thus reducing erosion. I was now convinced that biodynamics was the only way to improve our agricultural practice, to make our community better and to release us from our debts to the banks. My father is now convinced by the biodynamic applications. After five or six years, over 30 families in our village continue to work biodynamically.

The other important thing that has happened is that SARG, my organisation, has appointed me as representative of my village. Very early on I started giving biodynamic training courses in other villages and this work accorded me a great deal of recognition. For example, in 2014 I was able to present my work at a farmers' meeting – this was the first time that I spoke in public about my work. This made me realise that biodynamic agriculture is no longer just a farming method for me: it has become a new life goal! I became a biodynamic expert and trainer. This knowledge has changed me and I would like to bring this transformation to my village and my community: my work and my knowledge are now my tools. Nowadays when a farmer asks me for advice, I feel that this is truly what I should be doing.



Nasari Chavan, biodynamic farmer in a tribal village in India, adviser and trainer for the SARG organisation



Leaf metamorphosis of greater burnet

How can I be open to the essence?

Ute Kirchgaesser



The plant breeder Ute Kirchgaesser shows how the search for a deeper relationship to the plant has led her to a path on which she has gradually developed a soundboard for the spiritual.

I would like to describe the way by which, as a plant breeder, I have come over almost 20 years to an expanded higher relationship to reality. My research has looked at the changes to seed from the influence of sound intervals. I was amazed to see that this "treatment with intervals" gave rise to significant differences in the plant characteristics – even affecting the offspring. I have also developed my observations by laying out leaf sequences. Now I repeatedly look in amazement at the plots where I do my trials. Amazed at the strength with which the plants react and can change their form because the seed was played an interval for 20 minutes. The documented changes are quite different from anything I have previously experienced in plant breeding. I was able to identify

some of the changes to the plants with my plant breeding knowledge, but there were also changes that I was unable to detect and document with my former methodology (consisting of mass, number, weight and lists). Amazement, questions and bewilderment ensued, and led to the following questions: how do I deal with this? Is it actually good for the plants to take these impulses from the intervals into the future – including with regard to human nutrition?

As a plant breeder I told myself: I simply need another, new, broader relationship to the plants to be able to follow what is happening. This led to other questions: how is it that plants can feed us so well? What do we human beings owe to plants in our development?

Questioning in awe

With this attitude of awed questioning, I developed a feeling for what it was we humans owe to the plants in our evolution. And from observing the similarities in the plant and human being, I came to the concept of the

"common causation". This recognition of the commonalities in evolution cemented my relationship to the plants and to what we share.

Following this I went further into other research methods: research on formative forces, meditation and work with „constellation work“. These are areas which have further widened my angle of perception, for example through the question: what conditions are necessary for an insect that naturally lives in our environment to suddenly become an insect that we consider to be a pest? It requires a relationship between the insect and the plant and it needs conditions that cause this relationship to work in such a way that we perceive it as a pest. Another relationship to reality revealed itself to me in which the connection between plant and human being becomes perceptible. I increasingly had the experience of not being alone in the field. This perception gave me a new certainty in my work as a plant breeder. When arriving at the field I therefore had the inner need to say "good morning". This attitude of a short simple pause is a challenge that everyone knows in their own area and that can be roughly expressed as, "actually I'd like to, but ...". To overcome this requires us to emerge from the "getting it done mode" in our daily work and to be open for the presence and diversity of active beings.

What is the effect of thinking, feeling and willing?

I had the following pedagogical experience: children were spontaneously asked to find the correct sequence of leaves in a leaf sequence – and of course did this naturally and intuitively right. However with adults the experiment led to discussions without end, so that no correct result was obtained. This brought me a further insight. The feeling children have a very clear relationship to the reality of plants, while adults lose themselves in intellectual speculation. In the follow-up to this experience I recalled a quotation by Rudolf Steiner on the relationship of thinking and reality: "I only want to indicate in this way that in point of fact our thinking is quite incompetent to form a decision in respect of reality." The realisation that the knowledge I have so far learned by thinking is of no help in dealing with the full reality, but that I need to approach the phenomena which occur in a different way, that I want to enter into them, was a kind of sounding board for my wondering perception. My basic attitude now is not primarily via thinking but from an impulse of the will, to perceive the world of plants, their presence and activity as a truth out of the feeling realm. This attitude of really connecting with a truth also silences the "actually..." and "but..." and

gives me new certainty in my daily work. The expression that I have found for it is belief. Belief – despite its negative connotation especially in the German-speaking world – is more than a state. It is the activity of connecting all the capacities of my soul with a reality. It gives me security in coming to a different relationship to reality. Fanaticism and dogmatism which are also to be found in the realms of natural science and spiritual science (repeatedly linked to the concept of belief at the moment) I believe to be due to the fact that only one capacity of the soul travels alone through the world, as it were, without having a connection to the other capacities: thinking, feeling and willing. I consider thinking to have the role of giving me the ability to make myself aware of the degree to which my inner attitude, my mood, the way in which I enter into a meeting, have a crucial effect on what sort of nature this meeting will have. The primary access to an entity is not to be found in thinking but rather in the feeling realm and is then connected to the two other abilities. With what attitude do I approach? Do I want to have an encounter, or do I want to be right?

I want to summarise these reflections with the words of Christian Morgenstern:

The Washing of the Feet

I give you thanks, cold, silent stone,
And bend me down in awe before you.
From you the plant in me has grown.

I give you thanks, green grass and flower,
And stoop in reverence before you.
You let me win the beast's swift power.

I thank you all, plant beast and stone
And bow in gratitude before you.
You led, all three, to me alone.

We give thanks, bright Child and Star,
And kneel us down in love before you.
For because thou art, we are.

Thanks flow from all the Gods and Lands,
And from each God again expands.
In thanks all Being joins its hands.**

* Rudolf Steiner: *The World of the Senses and the World of Spirit* (GA 134), lecture given on 27 December 1911, Hanover

** Christian Morgenstern: Translation found online: *Freeing the Human Spirit - The Threefold Social Order, Money, and The Waldorf School* by Michael Spence <https://leadtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Freeing-the-human-spirit-M-Spence.pdf>



The agricultural individuality: a new quality of time and work

Henri Murto



Based on his own biography, Finnish farmer Henri Murto describes how – on the first biodynamic farm in Finland, in the lonely quiet of the far north – he found that he is feeling better than ever before. Where do these life forces originate? And what is their relationship to the farm individuality? These are two of the questions that he has pondered in the course of his journey.

A life between polarities

I come from the far north and live there with two polarities and two challenges: I am a farmer and I live in Finland. It is obviously a big challenge to farm at 63 degrees latitude. The Finnish landscape is full of contrasts: in summer there is nothing but sun and in winter there is no sun at all. Geographically Finland also lies in a polarity between west and east.

When as a young student in Helsinki I "accidentally" found out about biodynamic agriculture, this was such a

strong experience that in 2008 I decided to do my practical training on a biodynamic farm. Nowadays I and my wife live and work on this farm, the Rekola Farm. It has been run by the same family for 400 years and converted to biodynamics as far back as 1972. The experiences with the work and life on this farm have now given me the courage to talk about the farm individuality.

Rhythm carries life

After working for five months on the Rekola Farm I felt better than I ever had: physically, emotionally and even spiritually. And this despite the fact that in summer the sun shone the whole time and I hardly slept. I started to wonder why it was that I felt so good on the farm. It is true that I had good food and practical work, but what was the deeper reason? I felt really healthy. The Finnish word for healthy "elinvoima" expresses the idea that the organs (elin) feel themselves as being strong (voirma) and that this strength streams into the person's spirit. So this meant that my entire being felt very healthy. An important reason for this was the rhythm in which I had worked



for these five months. Rudolf Steiner's famous answer to the doctor Rudolf Hauschka on his question, "what is life?" was, "study rhythm, rhythm carries life". This was a vivid experience for me, because on the farm we had a strong connection to the earth and to the seasons. Can you picture my situation? I came from Helsinki where, though I had an active social life, it totally lacked rhythm. And in the great loneliness of the farm I was able to find this healthy rhythm!

I would like to read a quotation from Bernard de Chartres: "We are the dwarves who sit on the shoulders of giants". I feel that the farmer from the Rekola Farm is like the giant and the picture shows our relationship – the farmer looks at me and seems to say, "slower, lad, slowly."

The purpose of work and the quality of time

Another aspect which we have to discover anew is the purpose of work. In the future artificial intelligence will replace a great deal of human work. So we need to rediscover what work is. The best way to do this is to integrate creativity into the work and a farm is the best place for this. My mentor on the farm, Kalervo Rekola, who taught me everything about farming, is a modest quiet person. It is thanks to him that the farm does not have any debts, which is a great gift for all of us. He is so modest and frugal that he uses his working clothes for a long time and also mends everything. I see this modesty and altruism as signs of the new work.

Another important point is the quality of time. When I arrived at the farm it had its own farm bakery. Sirkka Rekola, the baker, had worked there for 33 years. I also wanted to become a baker, because you can imagine how nice and warm it was in the bakery in winter. Sirk-

ka is also a modest person. For 33 years she had been making the same rhythmic movements when baking bread – and I could directly and tangibly sense the etheric dimension of this work, this "routine".

And yet another experience of the farm individuality: we had officially completed the change of generation on the farm. Then we sent Kalervo Rekola on holiday. When we were alone on the farm, we had the impression that something was different than before. At that moment I understood that Rekola, through his many years of work in this place, had built up a close relationship to the farm's angel, to the farm individuality. I sensed that this individuality wanted to make

a connection to me. Our personal development always goes hand in hand with the development of the earth and of humanity: they are indivisible.

The Silence of Finland

On the Rekola Farm we are closely connected to the elements. Rudolf Steiner said that the human I is not in us but outside. On the farm I had the experience that my I is not just in me but also in the surroundings. It was a huge challenge for me to move to this quiet region because I am so fond of pursuing a social life. But due to this I was able to realise that the greatest wisdom lies in silence – the ability to be able to listen in the silence. And in this stillness my higher I can speak to me. This is an endless source of creativity. When we learn to listen to each other we can jointly create a social sphere. The social sphere is that in which we can create something new, in which we can transform. And there is a further aspect: if we want to change something in agriculture, we have to allow for both ecology and sociology. We worked together for ten years to find a structure for our cooperation. Every month we met for a discussion in an open space. When we can put complete trust in the other, even if they do not speak but remain silent, this creates a wonderful feeling. Silence is the possibility of knocking at the door of the spirit. The next step is to realise that we can create harmony when we have a conversation. For example, if we exchange ideas about the farm individuality we have the ability to make a relationship with time and with the work.

My most recent experience is discovering the art of dialogue. The word dialogue contains "dia" – duality, polarity – but also "log" – the logos, creativity. Two together and god in the middle: in dialogue we can achieve this.

We need a knowledge of that what is in becoming

Constanza Kaliks

The picture that we have of others implies – often unconsciously – their ways of being in and with the world. How the person themselves thinks has consequences for their action – in relation to others, to nature, to themselves.

Is there a way that human beings can see and be in-and-with the world that grasps the process of becoming in such a way that it constantly develops anew through and with this seeing and being? – A seeing that becomes cognition and a being that becomes life are the expression of a spiritual reality. That kind of reality that is to be found in human beings and is needed in the human being as an active co-creator, is a reality in transformation that can become humanised – in all its relationships: in relation to itself, to others and to nature.

Today a cognition of that what is in becoming appears to be increasingly important, in fact necessary, for many areas of life. This requires a type of cognition that demands that the cogniser themselves enters into movement in order to learn to see what is coming into being in the accomplishment of this process – so that what they see is more than what has already become.

Many young people nowadays are asking the question of how to live on earth if you take your own responsibility seriously. The earth is so polluted – we should not allow any more waste to be deposited – how will it be possible to live on and from the earth? A conflicting feeling arises that was expressed for example at the conference at the beginning of the year in questions about climate change: on the one hand I do not want to make any impact, but on the other I have entered the world to exist there and do something for the future of the earth.

The Free University of Spiritual Science would like to make a contribution to these questions – for the cognition of that which is coming into being, that is always a relationship, is formed from relationships and that creates both relationships and connections. What kind of cognition can grasp life – that which is always changing? Spiritual science in this context is not knowledge of the spirit but spirit that becomes knowing in its living reality, through the living reality in which it takes part: a knowledge that arises in and through life. Rudolf Steiner talked about a thinking "[...] not [in] mere thoughts but [one] that sinks us into the things, that thinks with the things and events of the world."^{*}

^{*} Steiner, Rudolf. *Spiritual-Scientific Consideration of Social and Pedagogic Questions*. GA 192. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1991. Lecture 3, 1st May 1919.

There is currently an explicit question about a change in consciousness. If we look back at the development of our consciousness, we look back at change. A picture that can help us to understand this is that of the infinite sphere and the ubiquitous centre. God is – the tradition of this statement can be followed back to Hermes Trismegistos and was received and developed in the European Middle Ages – described as follows^{**}: "God is the infinite sphere: its centre is everywhere, its periphery is nowhere." Master Eckhart described this sentence in a sermon at Easter 1292, and at the start of the modern age Giordano Bruno moved these previously divine characteristics into the world: now the universe becomes an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

This transformation in consciousness at the start of the modern age indicates a great turning point: the human being begins to "objectify" the earth, to reify it, and it is therefore increasingly experienced as a possession. Human beings can understand the earth, it becomes transparent to them when they understand the relationships and can express this in a common language – the language of what can be measured, the language of mathematics. This allows man to increasingly conquer space with his knowledge, to the point where he can go to the limits of the earth and beyond, can even leave the earth and "look back" at it. The human being looks "back" at the earth from the moon – in 1969 for the first time, somewhat more than half a century ago.

The reification of the world and the associated way to know oneself in the world create continuous exclusion, destruction. The human being does what he wants with the world, with other people, with nature – from a consciousness that experiences itself at the centre of a world that is at his disposal.

Johannes Kepler discovered from measurements – initially contrary to his own assumptions – that the courses of the planets are elliptical. He saw the sun-centred system as a dynamic universe which remained in motion due to the relationship of mass and movement.^{***}

There are two focal points in an ellipse to which all points have a specific relationship – the sum of the distances of each point of the ellipse from the two focal points is con-

^{**} Cf. Mahnke, Dietrich. *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt*. Stuttgart – Bad Cannstadt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1966.

^{***} *On the work published 400 years ago in 2019 on the course of the stars cf. Held, Wolfgang. Das Goetheanum*, Feb. 2020.

stant. The picture which arises is no longer a geometrical concentric one, but one determined by a distance ratio and in which the relationships of the elliptical courses of all planets stay in interaction and in mutual dependence as a whole moving organism. The relationships of all relationships give rise to the wonderful dance of the planets – the relationship is the constitutive element. The mutuality, the reciprocity is the constituting formative element: it appears as a condition of the "way it is" of the solar system.

Does this picture not correspond to the consciousness which is needed nowadays: to understand the human being in his connection, his constitutive relationship to others, to the world, to himself? His relationship to the world will determine the world, his relationship to human beings can help – or hinder – the human in the human being. It is a change in consciousness from a centric consciousness to an "ex-centric" one, in which a force field arises from the relationship, from a reality of constitutive reciprocity.

Rudolf Steiner developed a quest for knowledge that sought and recognised the constitutive element of ones own development in the meeting with the world and others. The act of knowing becomes participation in a relationship – with the world, with nature, with the other and with oneself in a self-knowing perspective.

Understanding the other as a free human being poses the particular challenge of understanding the other by means of their own concepts, in other words, "we must take over into our own spirit those concepts by which he determines himself"^{*} – according to Steiner in his "Philosophy of Freedom". Here again it is mutuality that enables knowing – a space arises in the relationship which not only has a centre but which is formed from the relationship of both "focal points".

This inclusion and involvement of the other in our awareness is a central aspect of the change in consciousness which started to appear at the beginning of the 20th century. The Copernican revolution did not happen at a single instant but extended over a long period of over 100 years: from the moment when it was thought to material evidence through measurements. It took even longer until it became universally influential for science. Maybe this change, that started to be able to be experienced and seen at the start of the 20th century, is also like this, still emerging, in search of its own language that will allow it to be expressed.

The experience that cognition participates in reality is common to all human beings: it does not appear to be linked to specific forms of education. The Brazilian teacher Paulo Freire, for example, describes work with people who as adults are unable to read and write. During a meeting in a cultural group in Chile, one farm worker said: "Now I see that there is no world without human beings." To this the teacher replied:

Let us for the sake of argument assume that everyone on earth dies, but that the earth itself remains with its trees, birds, animals, rivers, lakes and stars. Would all that not be a world? "No!" answered the farm worker emphatically, "because then there would be no one to say, that is a world."^{**}

This person knows that cognition of the world is not indifferent to the world: there must be someone there who says that there is a world.

So the meeting with the world is not secondary but a constitutive reality of every human being. Every person lives in different, simultaneous, precise but nevertheless interpenetrative relationships which have him as the one, and nature, the others, the things, as the other multiple focal points of the ellipses that keep themselves in mutual relation.

The quality of the whole space changes fundamentally if this is no longer determined by only one centre and its sphere, but from an interaction of many mutually determining focal points which are each related to one another and are constituted from this relationship to the other points. The entire sphere then develops completely differently when formed from non-centric relationships: it includes the living. Getting to know this living reality space requires a different language than the one for what can be measured – the sections of the Free University of Spiritual Science aim to practise this language on the specific questions that arise nowadays, in the pursuance of a search for knowledge which tries to grasp the reality of what is in the process of becoming. The becoming that – according to Paulo Freire – is the vocation and the right of all human beings.



Constanza Kaliks, Leader of the Youth Section at the Goetheanum and member of the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society.

* Steiner, Rudolf. *The Philosophy of Freedom*. GA 4. Tb., Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2016. Chapter XIV. " [...] but if we are to understand a free individuality we must take over into our own spirit those concepts by which he determines himself, in their pure form (without mixing our own conceptual content with them)."

** Freire, Paulo. *Pädagogik der Unterdrückten*. Stuttgart – Berlin: Kreuz Verlag, 1971, p. 87.

Michael Letter – In search of the spiritual in nature and landscape: art as a guide

Jean-Michel Florin

Every year at the Agricultural Conference we work on a text by Rudolf Steiner from the Michael Letters, this year "Historic Catclysms at the Dawn of the Spiritual Soul". This describes the development of the inner constitution of man (development of consciousness) from ancient Greek times to the present. This shows how the relationship of the human being to the spiritual – the theme of this conference – has repeatedly changed over time. "The connection with and severance from the Divine Spiritual Beings [...] takes place with varying intensity in the course of succeeding ages."***

In what follows I will outline this development with the help of art. Art, especially sculpture and painting, helps with an understanding of how people in different ages have perceived the spiritual and physical world. Artists are especially predestined for this, particularly because they have no practical interest in the world. What is more, their art works also give a picture of the state of consciousness of each era. Artists have a very keen sense for what is present in the spiritual air and what is approaching from the future.

Intellectual and mind soul in Greek culture

In the Greek cultural era, with the development of the intellectual and mind soul, people gradually freed themselves from their connection to the divine. They had learnt to think independently. For example, the oracle in the Temple of Apollo in Delphi did not give clear answers but only prophecies which the people had to interpret. So people had to think for themselves, make decisions and produce their own laws for living together in their cities. Sayings like "know thyself", "man is the measure of all things", "know the right moment" or "practice is everything" describe this new view of life. Two different statues of Athena show the two sides of this Greek state of consciousness very convincingly.



Athena with the spear (460 BC)



Athena Nike (410 BC)

On one side we see the wonderfully alive, thinking Athena with the spear (460 BC); her gaze is focussed on a point. We sense the utmost concentration which is turned towards the earth. This is a picture of the evolving intellectual soul. Human beings are beginning to understand the world for themselves.

The relief sculpture of Athena Nike (410 BC) shows a very different mood. She is portrayed as lively and gracious, giving the impression that she might jump out of the stone at any moment. This sculpture is an image of the mind soul, which senses the movements and inner impulses of the body very accurately.

In both sculptures we can sense how the sculptor had felt the life forces – particularly if we compare these with later Roman sculptures.

Separation from the divine in subsequent epochs

Intellect and mind or heart, the two abilities of the soul which were still joined as long as man experienced his thoughts as living, became ever more clearly separated during the course of history, particularly through the advent of the consciousness soul (that caused a strict sep-

* Rudolf Steiner: *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (GA 26)

** *ibid.*



Ambrosius Bosschaert, Vase of Flowers in a Window (1618–19)

aration between people and their environment). They developed in two contrary streams which repeatedly battled each other over the course of the following 2000 years: Romans and the peoples of the north, nominalism and realism in the Middle Ages, Catholicism and the Reformation in the Renaissance, etc. This state of being freed from the divine initially meant that humans had to find the way to themselves, and a separation from the living connection. As time went on, particularly after the Renaissance, a new world view arose which reached its peak in the 17th and 18th centuries. Rudolf Steiner wrote of this: "And at length the time approached [...] in which the forces of the soul that inclined towards the Spirit were diverted from the Spiritual altogether." *

This picture by the Flemish painter, Ambrosius Bosschaert, is a perfect image of how people had now separated from any supersensible spiritual dimension. A century earlier Raffael painted a Madonna in front of a window. We now see a purely physical accurate representation of natural elements which are all uprooted from their context – a totally abstract composition. Here we can experience the new ability to separate everything from its context in order to analyse the component parts more precisely: all the living beings are reduced to their outer appearance like objects. Man himself finds that he is separated from the world, all experience of the living

* *ibid.*



Jean-François Millet, The Angelus (1857–59)

forces has vanished so that even the flowers appear to be frozen.

But the mind and heart soul quality is still alive. For example, in the romantic painting by Jean-François Millet, which shows the longing for the good old days. Although he lived during the industrial revolution, Millet tried to live like the farmers of former times. It is interesting to note that, during the last century, this picture hung beside the television in almost every living room in France – a symptom of this conflict in the soul. We can in fact still feel these two tendencies in our hearts: the intellectual soul and the mind soul. Let us take the current example of the relationship to agriculture in the context of climate change: two attitudes are in conflict in the public debate. On the one hand are people who think that technology will solve all the problems with "smart climate agriculture" (by collecting data, farmers should be able to control the great "machine of nature"). On the other hand are people who believe that the best solution lies in going back to a natural landscape with the minimum of intrusion. On the one hand a totally materialistic view, on the other a great trust in mother nature. But in neither case do we go through a real and personal experience of the spiritual.

New approach to the spiritual since the Michael epoch

The next artists show how this can be done through painting. One of the first who tried to have a new breakthrough to the spiritual was Vincent van Gogh. He started painting in 1879, 20 years after Millet, just at the beginning of the Michael epoch in which, according to Rudolf Steiner, the spiritual world opened again for human beings. Van Gogh experienced this new "spiritual mood" in the atmosphere. On his artistic path he overcame the



Vincent van Gogh, *The Sower* (1888)

separation between subject and object and entered the imaginative world of living cosmic forces. He sensed that we should stop looking at the world in a cold naturalistic way, but instead should develop new faculties which reconnect us to the world. He wrote, "Certainly the imagination is a faculty that we need to develop, and it alone can lead us to create a more uplifting and comforting nature than that which the hurried glance at the constantly changing, rapidly passing reality allows us to grasp." His painting "The Sower" shows in a striking manner how human beings can actively bring the qualities of the sun and of love into the earth.

In Wassily Kandinsky's Bavarian landscapes, some of which resemble pictures by Van Gogh, you can see that colour is released from the cage of form. He also felt the new Michael age very personally, and it is certainly not coincidence that he chose St. George, the earthly representative of Michael, for the cover picture of the "The Blue Rider" almanac. Kandinsky, who attended Rudolf Steiner's lectures in Munich, wrote: "The shrouding of the spirit in matter is often so dense that there are generally very few people who can see through to the spirit. There are even many people who cannot see the spirit in a spiritual form. Nowadays there are many who fail to see the spirit in religion, in art. There are whole epochs which deny the spirit, as in such times the eyes of the people cannot generally see the spirit. This was the case in the 19th century and it is still the same nowadays to a large extent. People are blinded. A black hand is laid over their eyes. The black hand belongs to the person who hates. He who hates, endeavours with all means at his disposal to hold back this evolution, this elevation."

* A year later his pioneering book "Über das Geistige in der Kunst" (München, 1912) was published (Translated as:

* Wassily Kandinsky: *Über die Formfrage, Der Blaue Reiter*. 1911 Translated as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Dover Publications 2000.



Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 26, Rowing* (1912)

Concerning the Spiritual in Art). In his picture "Improvisation 26" Kandinsky tried to free the elements of painting (colours and forms), and gave them the opportunity to develop according to their natures – their spirit – and no longer simply to serve as a means to illustrate something naturalistic.

After the Second World War, Mark Rothko took the next step by giving the colours the opportunity to develop entirely from out of their own laws, from their spiritual quality. The artist is there to enable this to happen, without any reliance on the outer reality. The art critic Gillo Dorfles wrote about his first encounter with Rothko's art: "When I found myself standing in front of a huge canvas that Rothko had unrolled from its base, I felt as though I had been 'struck by lightning' [...]. All this triggered an immediate admiration in me [...]. In a certain way it was a return to true painting and at the same time the breakthrough of the most absolute abstraction. From this moment onwards I had a feeling, which was later confirmed by the words of the artist, of finding myself before a painting that was both anti-realistic and also, I dare to say, 'transcendentalising'. In other words, a spiritual painting. At that point I thought of Goethe's famous words on the sensory moral effect of colours, a painting emerging from the colour [...]."

Present day meanings and effects

To conclude I would like to outline some aspects of this new consciousness after the breakthrough to the spiritual in art. These can help us to understand our new state of consciousness in relation to the world.

** Gillo Dorfles: *Une chanson sans paroles... Une rencontre avec Mark Rothko dans Rothko*. ed. O. Wick, Skira, 2008



Mark Rothko, N.12. (1951)

Artists venture the path via the outer, sensory perceptible world inwards. They dare to paint their inner emotional experiences and attempt to present them as "factually"

as possible. This brings them to the spiritual dimension of reality.

The content becomes less important than the process. So modern artists do not try to paint a wonderful finished image of something past, but to open a new way into the future.

This overcomes the duality of subject/object and observer/observed. I have to become active when I look at the work of art, otherwise I have no experience. So I once again connect actively to the world from which the earlier evolution has separated me. This new faculty gives every human being the possibility of contributing to the future reality out of a new connection they themselves create. The human being thus becomes a co-creator.

Are these aspects not equally important for an agriculture of the future?



Jean-Michel Florin (France):

Co-Leader of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum and coordinator and course leader in the French Biodynamic Agriculture Movement MABD

The meaning of the sun for the being of the earth

Anna Cecilia Grün



Anna Cecilia Grün works as a vegetable gardener in a Demeter market garden by Lake Constance. She has the special gift of being able to perceive forces, elements and phenomena in the supersensible world. In what follows she shows how important the

sun is for the earth. The question is, how can the earth be strong enough to be able to receive the sun's forces without burning?

"The earth is burning!" Fires in many parts of the world, heatwaves, hardened soils and droughts – we have the

feeling that this can no longer be endured and the sun is much too strong.

But it is not the sun that is too strong, but the earth that is too weak to be able to absorb and process the forces which stream towards it from the sun – the positive and in fact strengthening forces.

Looked at spiritually, it is the sun angel Michael* who acts to help the earth via the sun. He is the only one of the seven archangels who still believes in man's ability to develop towards freedom.

* Michael is the spirit who, according to Rudolf Steiner's research, has taken on the spiritual guidance of mankind since 1879 and who does this in a way that totally respects human freedom.

One hundred years ago Rudolf Steiner described how the planetary archangels had given up hope, confidence and belief that human beings could still develop towards freedom.

So it is all the more important that Michael still believes in us. Michael's confidence in us human beings, in our ability to develop and become free, streams from the sun onto the earth. And it is very important for the earth to feel this, because our human destiny is connected with that of the earth. Our destiny is the earth and we humans are the earth's destiny.

Another aspect is that the souls who have not yet been born work on the earth through the sun and want to help form the earth as their future home. They work alongside Michael and – as described by Rudolf Steiner – even through the weather. Through the sun's rays the earth experiences the forces of unborn human souls: goodwill and care.

The opposite pole of this is the Ahrimanic forces that want to destroy everything living and to transform the earth into pure matter, as well as the openness of many people, for their purposes. The Ahrimanic influence has consequences such as climate change and species extinction: the earth's life forces become weaker and retreat further and further. The life is lost from the interpersonal realm. Human beings become alienated from other human beings and from the earth. It is not only the currently incarnated people who lose their connection to the earth: also the unborn souls can no longer make such a strong connection to the earth as they would like to and in fact must do.

After these discoveries the question is, what can we do? As gardeners and farmers we fortunately can have a direct effect on the realms of life forces in the earth, in plants and in the living humus layer of the soil. The humus layer is also a very special carrier of the Christ forces. Nowadays we have a very remarkable process in which Christ reconnects to the life forces of the earth. Enlivening care for plants and soil and strengthening through the use of biodynamic preparations are important influences that are available to us to develop life forces, approach cosmic influences and assimilate them into the earth.

It is also particularly important that we perceive the earth not as an object but as a living being. This is easy to understand if we experience the difference between

the perception of a chair and a person by gently touching them. Many people nowadays are excluded from this contact with the living earth and agriculture. So we should invite as many people as possible to have this experience on our farms and in our gardens because there are people coming to the earth who were unable to develop a good connection to it before birth. These people are in urgent need of what we have to offer, particularly the young people who are now so courageously and determinedly getting involved in climate change issues in front of the world public. In my view, this movement is also accompanied by Michaelic forces. Michael is really behind these people – they have brought this impulse from before birth, carry it in their lives and know that they now need to do something for the earth, now it needs our help, right now!

Simply being a Demeter farmer is maybe not enough nowadays. There is also a pressing task to stand up and tell the world what we do.

Because it is the inner attitude of the person that determines what is important in human activities (nature conservation, organic agriculture, etc.), we should take this special inner attitude with which we can encounter the earth as a being very seriously. To treat the earth and naturally our fellow human beings with wakefulness, consideration and friendliness is an attitude we should cultivate so that sun forces, Michaelic forces, can arise in our hearts. Human heart forces are related to the sun forces and we can radiate sun forces for the earth when we meet it in this conscious way. The earth can receive these from the physical outer sun – and we do everything to help it to be able to absorb and process them, so that they can have a healing influence. Then sun forces can stream to the earth as human heart forces.

This is why it is so incredibly important that, now in particular, we get involved in the question of the spiritual in agriculture, in the world and in us. Rudolf Steiner said of the secret of the heart: "The human heart arises from the gold that lives everywhere in the light and that streams in from the universe and actually forms the human heart."^{*}

* Rudolf Steiner: Initiationswissenschaft und Sternenerkenntnis (GA 228), Lecture given on 29 July 1923, Dornach [no English translation available]

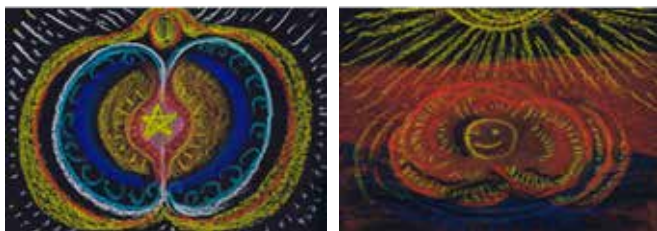
From the sensory to the spirit – experiences from formative forces research

The following three individual contributions present facets of research on formative forces and their links to other methods for studying the spiritual dimensions of reality and combine to form a whole.

An attitude of loving openness

Dorian Schmidt

Taking up the quotation from Ute Kirchgaesser, "our inner attitude defines what we see", Dorian Schmidt's talk showed how a path gradually opens access to the world of formative forces. First there is the distanced factual *sense perception* when we focus very exactly on the form of, for example, an apple or potato and find the correct terms for this. We then open our perception through a feeling of *wonder*, just like a child. The third step is when we establish a feeling of *reverence*. At the fourth level we further deepen the feeling of *humility* and finally, as the last step, develop the inner attitude of *loving openness* which permits us access to the formative forces. This process reveals that the apple and potato have very different forces. In the apple we can experience splendour and perfection, it is like a piece of heaven on earth. In contrast the potato reveals a very different gesture – it repeatedly takes a piece of sunlight in order to bring it into the earth.



Apple and potato. Pictures: Antje Schmidt

Every path to the spiritual is unique

Uli Johannes König

Using the example of the animal sheaths of the biodynamic dandelion preparation, Uli Johannes König outlined how knowledge from different sources can be brought together into a personal evidence image. First we need to study what Rudolf Steiner said about this preparation in the Agricultural Course in order to understand its make-up. Then we look into what science has to say about the functions of the two

possible animal organs: first the mesentery which encloses the gut in all mammals and the greater omentum that has two functions in the abdominal cavity: a support function and an immune function.

Research on formative forces supplements this study with additional experiences. Two qualities of the mesentery can be experienced pictorially: on the one hand a strong rhythmic activation, formation and working and, on the other hand, total stillness as though from a higher spiritual level. In contrast, the greater omentum works like a gateway through which archetypal forces stream in and spread out in the organism.

The overall view of the different experiences and findings give rise to an evidence image which can be further differentiated through additional information, for example the comment by a doctor that the greater omentum is called the "gateway to destiny".

From the spiritual to the plants

Christina Henatsch

Based on the practical question "How can I experience the effect of the cosmos in the plant and use this to strengthen the life forces of my crop plants?", Christina Henatsch follows a very individual way to the spiritual in the plant. She has developed a range of methods and experiments to find the effect of the cosmos, such as sowing during different planetary constellations, playing sounds, intervals and songs, etc. Following successful preliminary tests, she had a surprise: over time the treatment no longer showed any effect with lettuces. It was as though the lettuce had withdrawn. She received a request from the plant itself: "Withdraw your self-will at once!" The plant wanted to be asked. This was the start of a 15-year-long research study in which Henatsch discovered that it is people's attitude that determines how the plants behave and what nutritional qualities they will finally display. She developed a type of ritual plant treatment which enables a totally new access to the question "What should nutrition be?" Silencing her own will, she asks the plants and the beings connected to them: "What quality do you want to give us?" The breeding results which arise from this are much more convincing and wonderful than anticipated.



Knowledge of nature and self-knowledge in farming life

Christof Klemmer



The biodynamic farmer Christof Klemmer talks about his nearly 50 years of experience on the Sophienlust Farm. The basis for all the efforts and undertakings is first and foremost an interaction with nature, both in the practical work and also for the elements of the training.

How can we have a deeper and more powerful perception of the spiritual dimension of the nature beings on the farm and in agriculture? One important element is self-training which also has consequences for the social life.

Separation of outside and inside

The greatest obstacle on the path to the spirit is ourselves. We – for whom the materialism in which we live and work makes an expanded viewpoint of nature and agriculture impossible. I would like to describe my path to knowledge of the spirit in nature and agriculture. Three aspects are of particular importance: perception, self-knowledge and expansion of consciousness.

How do we perceive? An oak tree or a farm are usually ticked off quickly as outer concepts and thus made available as physical objects. They remain in the intellectual abstract realm. With this type of "knowledge" it is impossible to have a deeper perception. The external world and an inner experience are separated.

How can we overcome this separation of outer and inner? Steiner's first Leading Thought reads: "Anthropos-

ophy is a path of knowledge to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe."^{*} He describes that the human being in his inmost self has access to a spiritual world that he can also find outside himself (in nature and the cosmos). This requires exact observations of the sense world, correct understanding of what has been seen and the conscious participation of the soul in the act of knowing. The sense world joins the spiritual in our soul.

We look with our senses at the spiritual lawfulness of the world and can know them through our thinking. The sense world would appear incoherent without our thinking. It is we human beings who give order to the phenomena through our thinking. This process happens in our subconscious without thinking and is called experience. The processes of acquiring knowledge and forming concepts is not evident through the experience. We simply accept the events and live with the mental images we have formed.

The process of knowing must be understood in order to grasp the experiences consciously. If, for example, we wish to come closer to the being of a birch tree, then we need to vividly capture the birch in all its outward forms: as a seed, a seedling, a young plant, a fully grown plant and an old tree all the way to dying. We also need to carefully observe its form, colours and gestures at different sites, its changes through the seasons.

^{*} Steiner, Rudolf: *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, GA 26.

Through exact observation of all these different outward forms we create a new picture through a conscious process in our souls: the start of a new creation of the outer world in ourselves. This picture becomes ever more expressive and the being of the birch starts to speak in our souls.

The second step is to open our souls in order to place the facts of this manifestation in an appropriate relationship to each other through thinking. Through regular practice, it is possible to go further along this path and experience that the web of relationships becomes much richer and more diverse than the physical phenomena. It cannot be perceived all at once by the senses but can be known and experienced in our soul. As long as we only observe things in an outer way, they remain part of the outer world. But we can unite with them via thinking and feeling. Then they stop being outside us.

Meeting nature on the farm

On the Sophienlust Farm we have been carrying out an exercise with the farm community – farmers, artists and consumers – for seven or eight years along the course of a stream that runs through the farm. The aim was to better understand the landscape of the stream through feeling, observation and thinking.

Special importance was attached to developing feelings based on exact observations. Sharing this with others was very helpful in verifying the reality of the observations.

This enabled me to develop the ability to trace the mood which I experience on farms, for example, back to the observed details. But this perception of the moods and forces of specific places is only successful if I myself am in an appropriate mood. So, in the spirit of Rudolf Steiner's "Create periods of peace by finding moments for yourself in which you separate the important from the unimportant", I decided to follow the anthroposophical path of knowledge. Below I describe the elements of my meditation.

My anthroposophical path of knowledge

Exercise on reverence: the feeling of reverence is something unusual in modern times. This requires us to learn to look at something with veneration from deep within ourselves.

"The feeling of admiration is the raising force, the magnetic force that pulls us up to the higher spheres of the supersensible life. This is the principle of the occult world [...]."

* Steiner, Rudolf: *Riddles of the World* (GA 54). Lecture held in Berlin, 7th December 1905.

Picture meditation: Here I form a thought picture in my mind that is permeated as fully as possible by feelings. The feelings are just as important as the thoughts.

Practising thankfulness: At the end of the meditation we should develop a feeling of thankfulness for everything that comes to human beings.

"[...] all who do not feel inclined to entertain [the thoughts of thankfulness] will be incapable of developing within themselves that all-embracing love which is necessary for the attainment of higher knowledge." **

Seeing our fellow human beings anew

Long practice leads to a strengthened feeling ability and picture-forming and retaining capacities. The danger of overvaluing the ego can be countered by working on our biography, and in particular by allowing scenes to appear in our mind in which other people were important in our lives. This is the start of seeing our fellow human beings anew, and we notice how great an importance these encounters can have for us and our biography, when we do not only live with our I in ourselves, but also in other people. It can be said that anthroposophy is a path of knowledge that would like to lead the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in fellow human beings.

Developing new life

The origin and source of all existence is a divine being that has created everything. Because human beings have gained their freedom, this immense creative force can no longer work directly on the world and the cosmos. Through the death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ, a drop of this power has been put into each single person. The exercises described above can awaken and strengthen these creative powers.

This is what I believe to be the great task of an anthroposophically directed agriculture: to understand the farm or market garden entrusted to us with all its potential for development and on this basis to create and develop anew. It is our task as anthroposophical farmers and gardeners to assist the ageing earth to new places, in which new life, new diversity, new culture and new social and economic relationships can be developed.

Our predecessors have already demonstrated that this is basically possible: out of a climax forest they created our wonderful, diverse cultural landscape.

** Steiner, Rudolf: *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment* (GA 10).

Spirit and tradition: acknowledging nature as a mother

The four life sketches from South America and New Zealand have reminded us that many natives still practise an agriculture which fosters contact with spiritual beings. It is important for the biodynamic movement to acknowledge this so that these people can understand biodynamic agriculture more easily and connect it to their traditions. We did a tour of the spirituality of the Chilean Mapuche Indians with Marcela Vega and Marco Ancanten via the cultures of the Amazon rainforest with

Patricia Roth all the way to the tradition of the Maoris with Rachel Pomeroy.

Marco Ancanten started by standing on the stage and asking the spirits in an impressive manner whether he was permitted to speak there. He then described the meeting with "mother earth" as being a personal encounter, just like that with your own mother. With Patricia Roth he then reported on their current work in Amazon agriculture and forestry.

The situation of the natives in the Amazon rainforest

Patricia Roth

Last summer the burning Amazon left a lasting impression. What thoughts and hopes are held by the people who currently live there? Patricia Roth, forestry engineer, gives an insight into this difficult situation.

Amongst the native inhabitants it is the women who are the custodians of the seeds – true treasures that are thousands of years old. There are many traditional sorts of bananas, cassava, maize and other tubers which the communities exchange with each other.

They do not use the word "biodynamic" as such and no biodynamic preparations are used there. But the spirit of biodynamics can be found in the close connection with nature and the stars. The indigenous people have an immense knowledge of plants and animals. To regulate unwanted insects they burn particular plants and spray this over the food crops. The seedlings are identified, depending on the species and the cycle of the moon. Spirituality is ever-present: the spirits of the forest are asked for permission before the soil is prepared, seed is sown or crops harvested. The farming year is divided up by rituals. Every community has its own way of doing things. For example, adult men prepare the soil, but only young boys are allowed to do the sowing.

The forest is very important for the soil. After clearing an area of forest the soil is "sacred" and fertile. After a number of years of cultivation the people leave it to rest so that the forest grows back and has a regenerative effect. In the forest the people's relationship to the soil is not the same as outside the forest where the ground is permanently cultivated – often to excess.

When the forest burns

The indigenous people use the traditional technique of clearing the forest with fire in order to obtain fertile land, but this involves small controlled fires of a maximum area of 0.5 hectares per family. This cultivation system has always been practised in the Amazon region during the dry season, but in 2019 the fires got out of control. Since the election of Jair Bolsonaro as president of Brazil in 2018, the forest has been burned increasingly frequently with impunity in order to set up industrial operations. The indigenous people have started to find alternatives to felling to help in fighting the fires at community level: planting Leguminous species, working organic material into the soil, maintaining the soil covering and setting up areas of agroforestry. But the political climate remains unfavourable – Brazil is living in dark times.

Patricia Roth supports education for children, young people and adults in order to (re)connect them with the indigenous culture and their spirituality. She believes that the scenario of forest destruction can only be reversed through huge investment in high quality public education. She hopes that the international community will help to better understand and defend this vital ecosystem in order to keep up pressure on the Brazilian government.

(Summary of an article from *Biodynamis Printemps* 2020 by Maëva Bourgeois)

Platform for supporting projects on conserving biodiversity in Brazil: www.vbio.eco

Global movement for tropical forests: www.wrm.org.uy/fr

Heaven on Earth

The sensory-supersensory constitution of our reality

Hans-Christian Zehnter

Prelude

Looking over a field, the image that we see is like a maxim for the whole of earthly reality: heaven is on earth. The blue sky that points beyond itself to a celestial background is to be found in us, in the human being, not in a sensory way but in our own soul and spirit. What appears at our feet as the world of the earth corresponds to the world of the human being's outer senses.



In the joining of heaven and earth, of the human inner and outer worlds, there is a meeting of both the supersensible and sensible as well as man and the world.

Overcoming two obstacles

What lights up more or less intuitively in this pictorial insight can be clarified step by step if we follow the way in which reality comes about in observing ourselves.



However as a preliminary to this we need to overcome two basic obstacles, in fact death-traps, which our modern thinking itself has placed in our way. Rudolf Steiner endeavoured throughout his life to release thinking from the grave of these two opponents in order to be able to bring it to life again: "If man were not here on earth — it is held — if he did not experience in his soul a reflection of what is going on in the world outside, everything would be just as it is. This holds good of natural science [...], but it also holds good for philosophy. *The philosopher of today is quite content to be a spectator, that is, to be merely in the purely destructive element of cognition. I wished to rescue knowledge out of this destructive element.*"

The act of knowing has ended up in a death: if it wants to rise from this death, then it has to overcome its spectator consciousness. This consciousness arises on the one hand from the materialistic world view and on the other from the opinion that the human inner life is of a purely subjective nature. Materialism generates a "world in itself", which is supposedly based on the world of objects which are meant to exist without human beings. Along with the opinion that the experiences in the human being's inner world have nothing to do with the true reality "out there", man is in fact relegated to the public gallery twice over.

But why are these "relegations" death? Just think how pitiable the world becomes when the red of the rose is explained by a wavelength in nanometres that triggers specific chemical and physiological processes in my eye.

* Rudolf Steiner: *The Study of Man* (GA 293), lecture given on 23 August 1919; italics HCZ.

Quoting Eduard Kaeser* we can say: anyone who talks about H₂O in the mountain stream has literally lost his senses.

Rudolf Steiner compares these two types of death in a paradigmatic way:

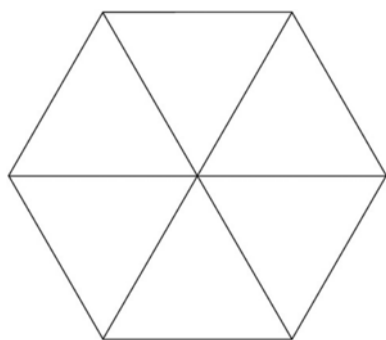
"The sense-perceptible world picture is the sum total of metamorphosing perceptual contents *without an underlying matter*."

"For man, opposition between objective outer perception and subjective inner thought-world exists only as long as he does not recognize that these worlds belong together. *Man's inner world is the inner being of nature*."

First, the perceptual side of reality is not based on matter. What we are dealing with are constantly changing perceptual pictures, in short, with a reality of appearances. On the other hand, what we experience inside us in relation to the world determines the being of nature (which reminds us of the beginning of this lecture about heaven and earth).

Self-observation of reality

So let us try to gain a picture of the constitution of this reality of appearance, retaining these two directions with the help of our senses and our inner life. The well-known example of the ambiguous figure of a hexagon that becomes a cube (Necker's cube) is a basic example of perception and experience.



The perception side remains – taken in isolation – the same. But a different reality occurs, depending on the "concept" that the observer, i.e. the one "realising", allows to emerge. It can simply stay as a hexagon divided into several parts or the cube can appear.

It is worthwhile to consider another example of visual perception.



Looking at the example above, at first you see merely a disconnected black and white inkblot image. Often no formative "concept" arises for a long time. At some point, however, something – which does not originate from our sense of sight but arises from our supersensible, spiritual comprehension – comes into sight, that gradually allows a convincing picture to emerge. There is then no question of what you see, but you are totally convinced of what you have glimpsed (in this case, a cowboy riding on a horse).

The moment when you finally see something is almost always a eureka experience lit up by a smile. Reality is a happy event, an insight, a discovery: "The percept is [...] not something finished and self-contained, but one side of the total reality. The other side is the concept. *The act of knowing is the synthesis of percept and concept*. Only percept and concept together constitute the whole thing", according to Rudolf Steiner.****

The surprising closeness of heaven

Ideas, concepts, etc. are far more than subjective abstractions. As we have seen, they reach into the sense perception *forming, generating reality and enlightening*. What appears as a dry philosophical concept turns out in this self-observation to be creative reality or as divine spiritual beings which – obviously and surprisingly – can enter our view more closely and more easily than usually imagined. From the observations made it is clear that reality is always composed of a sensory and a non-sensory or super-sensory part, which we can call a concept or idea.

* Eduard Kaeser: "Ethos des Stoffes", p. 138; in ders.: *Der Körper im Zeitalter seiner Entbehrlichkeit. Anthropologie in einer Welt der Geräte*, Vienna 2008.

** Rudolf Steiner: *Goethean Science* (GA 1), Chapter XVI "Goethe as Poet and Thinker, 2. The Archetypal Phenomenon". Italics HCZ.

*** Rudolf Steiner: *Goethean Science* (GA 1), Chapter XVIII "Goethe's World View in his Aphorisms in Prose". Italics HCZ.

**** Rudolf Steiner: *The Philosophy of Freedom* (GA 4), Chapter V: "The Act of Knowing the World". Italics HCZ.

Rudolf Steiner formulated the following "Wahrpruchwort*":

*The wealth of materials approaches the human sense
Mysteriously from the depths of the universe.*

*The spirit's word flows clarifying
In the soul's grounds from cosmic heights full of contents.
They meet in the human inside to reality full of wisdom.***

Our reality is pictorial

These insights into the constitution of reality reveal its true content.

- a. This is not of a physical material nature, but an *event* which takes place in the human being through the joining of percept and concept, through the meeting of heaven and earth.
- b. Using the language of the above-quoted verse, the location of reality is in the human inside. We are no longer spectators, far removed from the material and spiritual world, but are at the centre – heaven and earth meet through us, in us, and there give birth to our earthly reality.
- c. Reality is a *picture* that imparts meaning to the sensory from the super-sensory world of the concept or spirit. The super-sensory, invisible cube reveals itself when it engages in the sensory to create form. The daily reality is therefore not a "thing in itself reality" but, based on the foregoing observations, becomes a mirror of a super-sensory image-free world which, through its creation of the sensory side, leads the human being through picturing to consciousness.

Endless opportunities for the meeting of heaven and earth

Nature plays in constantly new ways on this basic principle of earthly-human reality, giving the human being the opportunity to learn to discover endless new forms of reality.

The four kingdoms of nature provide a certain basic orientation in this profusion of possibilities.

With its annual growing and dying away, the plant kingdom is the form of reality in which the becoming and passing away has its most vivid picture. The supersensible enters the sensory expansion of the plant form in the earthly picture reality and with its passing away it again disappears from the sensory world of appearance. The

plant world is the level of reality in which the supersensible reveals itself in such a way that the spiritual and physical appear in a variable metamorphosing relationship to one another as a process. The plant kingdom lives in this oscillation between physical and spiritual. The animal kingdom expresses itself by conferring meaning. Every animal species gives its surroundings, in fact even its own body, its specific relationship to the world as content through the way in which it behaves there. A cow directs our attention to something different than does a goat or a horse. Every animal species lives in its world of feeling, absorbs this environment accordingly, but conversely also gives the surroundings a tinge of the nature of its own soul. We need to grasp and immerse ourselves in these soul worlds if we want to meet the super-sensible, the being of the animal world. Finally, in human beings, the unique possibility of conscious identification with the world spirit appears in the gift of bringing about knowledge and reality. What has flowed into the creation spread around us humans – the world spirit – has entered in the knowing self-consciousness of the human being, in their I.

"The force that discloses the I within the consciousness soul is indeed the same force that manifests in all the rest of the world. [...] In what fills the consciousness soul, the hidden enters unveiled into the innermost temple of the soul. Yet it appears there only like a drop out of the ocean of all-pervading spirituality. Here, however, man must first take hold of this spirituality. He must recognize it in himself, then he will be able to find it also in its manifestations. What here like a drop penetrates into the consciousness soul, occult science calls the spirit. Thus the consciousness soul is united with the spirit, which is the hidden in all that is manifest." ***
The spiritual content of the world appears through each human being.

I hope that what I have hinted at here in this brief outline may encourage you to discover and take into yourselves the very diverse ways in which heaven and earth can meet each other. Every meeting provides plentiful opportunity for this.



Hans-Christian Zehnter (Switzerland).
Graduate biologist, Editor and Research Associate at the Rudolf Steiner Archive in Dornach.

* Rudolf Steiner: *Truth-Wrought-Words (and other verses)* translates by Arvid MacKaye Ege, Anthroposophic Press, Spring Valley, NY, 1979.

** Rudolf Steiner: *The Answers of Spiritual Science to the Big Questions of Existence*, GA 60, Lecture given on 20 October 1910

*** Rudolf Steiner: *An Outline of Occult Science*, GA 13, Chapter "The Essential Nature of Mankind", 1972



Wool is a natural skin



Claudy Jongstra, born in the Netherlands in 1963, is a textile artist whose works are exhibited all over the world. She studied at Utrecht College of Art and, since 1994, has worked with wool felt, humanity's oldest textile. She sees felt as offering a way to connect art directly to the cycle of nature.

With her large-scale works of art and architectural installations, Claudy Jongstra follows a holistic approach from the moorland sheep that supply the wool via the plant dyes that are produced on a biodynamic farm in the north of the Netherlands.

Christiane Haid and Barbara Schnetzler from the *Visual Art Section* visited Claudy Jongstra at her artist's farm in Holland and brought back the following interview.

Christiane Haid I believe you use pure original materials in your works of art. How did this come about?

Claudy Jongstra In the Netherlands in the 1990s there was little sense for textiles and traditional crafts, so I went to Great Britain. I first studied modern design and worked in this area for a while until I found it increasingly meaningless and started to get interested in natural materials like wool.

Haid How did you as an artist come to raise sheep?

Jongstra When I started to work with wool, I found it odd to be buying wool from an anonymous supplier. Something about that seemed wrong. So I very soon began getting wool from local breeds of sheep. This makes an immediate relationship to the place where you live and where you have your roots.

Soon we started to keep our own sheep – Drenthe Heath sheep. We now have a flock of 250 sheep and a shepherd who carries out natural landscape management with them. This has led to a kind of nature reserve – a wonderful harmonious biotope. Obviously the wool from these sheep has a special quality which influences the processing and then the work of art. But that is not all. From the start I had a vision of working ethically and not buying materials from just anywhere.

Barbara Schnetzler What is it that's so special about the substance of wool? It gives you warmth, both physically and emotionally. What is it about this substance that inspires you?

Jongstra The genius of wool, its whole spectrum. It keeps you warm in winter and cool in summer. It has the ability to be very flexible. When you take a woollen jersey out of your suitcase it resumes its shape immediately. The

fibres always spring back again, the wool is antibacterial, self-cleaning. These are things that inspire me.

Schnetzler Wool has totally lost its commercial value nowadays, synthetics have taken away its value – you don't get much for a kilo of wool any more.

Jongstra Exactly! Wool is often viewed as a waste material. By recycling the wool in our projects, we are trying to show people the value of this material.

This material is lacking right from childhood. Not every child can go to a Steiner school where children get to handle wool and learn things like weaving and spinning. So we run a lot of educational programmes for children. This is especially important in the Netherlands. 80 per cent of young people attend university, so there is almost no one who can make something with their hands. But these are exactly the kind of people we need. So we invite vocational school classes to visit: 16- and 17-year old fashion designers, game designers and florists. They learn to connect to seeds, plants, the harvest: it gives them a different awareness of these things. Only this can give rise to a new way of thinking about our world and to the start of a transformation. The change can only come about by doing: it is no use just talking about it.

Haid How did you come across biodynamic agriculture?

Jongstra Through our own farm. It isn't a big farm, just a little one where we mainly grow dye plants. However, this is not enough for our artworks, so we have broadened our colour range and now work in cooperation with biodynamic farmers. For example, we get the dyes extracted from sunflowers and marigolds from the farms we work with.

Haid Do you also work biodynamically on your farm?

Jongstra Yes, we do. We have now become something of a role model here. There are many conventional and traditional farmers who are interested in our way of working. Due to the dominance of monocultures in the Netherlands, interest is growing in biological diversity. There is an increasing awareness that monocultures damage nature and our entire lives. Through farming biodynamically we awaken an awareness of a new way of working with nature.

Schnetzler What areas are you currently working in?

Jongstra In January we set up a new company which covers the social aspect, education and also agriculture – it's called Extended Ground. All the projects have a social dimension. In terms of agriculture we are also involved in landscape gardening and we design dykes. In the care setting we are working with scientists who, through neuroscience studies, are able to demonstrate that contact with wool, for example in creative therapy, has effects on

the brain. It produces a demonstrable change in serotonin levels. As many people are far removed from contact with natural materials or completely doubt their healing ability, scientific studies can be very convincing.

Our social programmes are mainly intended for victims of human trafficking. Many of the victims come from Africa and therefore have a very strong inherent connection to natural materials. This enables a dialogue at a different level because it is easy to communicate via the material, the colour, and this creates a connection. The victims of human trafficking in particular have absolutely no connection to Dutch society. No one is interested in them and they are not part of anything. How can they ever find their place here? By working with them on things that they know from their past, something new can come about. We had a young man from Eritrea who, it soon became apparent, was a weaver. He found a connection immediately and now works with a carpenter. His old work has led to a new perspective, in a manner of speaking. You could also say that we hold a conversation with these people via our work.

A totally different area consists in developing a perfume. You need flowers and a binding agent, which can be oil from sunflowers or coconuts. We use sunflowers and beeswax. This is also an idea to create stimulus through diversity. Using fields of potatoes or maize, agricultural economists carry out research for us on the returns for agriculture. Making perfume is expensive, so what plants lead to what profit?

For farmers in the transition phase, this research has now shown that it is a new revenue model, with growing being done locally. The idea is to set up a manufacturing industry here in the north, but every farmer, e.g. in Switzerland, can acquire a licence and grow the necessary plants in their country. We have been developing this with the team for around two years now. Next year we will start on the manufacturing infrastructure, because there are a lot of farmers who are interested.

Haid What are the inner motives for your work?

Jongstra Climate change and human development. I want to do justice to people and to nature.

Haid What philosophy underlies your works?

Jongstra To do justice to people and to the land. So, it is more about human ability. We are not a factory, we are not Louis Vuitton or Dolce Gabbana, but our farm can be a model for others to understand: I can change my life. It is real and not impossible.

Unabridged interview at: <https://bit.ly/2Xu0dPM>

Awakening the heart of agriculture

Thea Maria Carlson



This talk on social justice made such a strong impression on the participants of the Agricultural Conference that at the end they gave a standing ovation to show their appreciation. Deeply moving!

Thea Maria Carlson began her lecture with 3 questions: "What does it mean to

find the spirit in agriculture? Where do we find spirit? How do we embody our spiritual ideals in our agricultural work?" Then she described how in the biodynamic movement we often see the spirit in plants and animals and develop new relationships based on this. But we sometimes forget to see the spirit in people. Her personal entry to agriculture was exactly via the social realm. When she was seventeen, she met a young man in her town, Santa Cruz, in California. He asked her, "what do you think about the conditions of the farm workers?" and he invited her to work as a volunteer for the Western Farm Workers Association. She visited a lot of farm workers in their houses and on farms and saw how these people who produce our daily food are badly treated: they were paid hardly any money, much less than the minimum wage, were exposed to chemical pesticides, etc. This work made a big impact on her but she forgot about it again for the time being. Only much later, after her degree and time working on several farms, did she awaken to this human dimension in agriculture again through her work with the Biodynamic Association in the United States. To present her own awakening to this human dimension, she told three stories of people who helped her.

First awakening

As Thea Maria shared, *"The first encounter that helped me to awaken was with Jim Embry, a participant in our 2014 North American Biodynamic Conference... Although I did not know who he was, I remember noticing him at the beginning of the conference both because of his radiant presence, and because his dark brown skin contrasted with the paler skin of almost everyone else at the conference. At the end of the conference, we held a plenary session where participants talked about their learnings and questions from the conference with each other, and then we invited a few people to share reflections with the whole group. Jim came to the microphone and said, "In this conference, we have been talking about the importance of biodiversity in our soils and in our farms. But let's look around this room. Where is the human biodiversity? How is the biodynamic movement going to move forward if human diversity is not present?"*

So, Thea Maria looked around again and in fact saw almost nothing but white people and realised: *"by not even thinking about race, I had created a conference space that was primarily a space for white people. I had created a space of exclusion, robbing both the people who had been included and the people who had been excluded of the richness that could have emerged from them coming together in the exploration and deepening of biodynamics."*

Afterwards she felt that they should change something for the next conference but didn't know how. So, she tried to find Jim Embry and discovered that he was an eco-activist who cultivates collaborative efforts at the local, national, and international levels, and has worked to connect social justice, food justice, and environmental justice within other social movements for the past fifty years. She asked him what the Association should change in the organization of the next conference to become more inclusive. He gave three very practical answers: *"ask people of color to be keynote speakers and workshop leaders in the conference, find funds for scholarships and prioritize giving those scholarships to people of color, build relationships with other organizations whose constituents were people of color to broaden outreach to those communities about the conference."*

Then Thea Maria asked herself why should we so focus on skin colour? Many of us who are white never think about being a member of a race. It is a social construct. But in the world nowadays we have a system built on ethnicity and skin colour. For instance, white people always have advantages, simply because they have a white skin – it is one aspect of materialism. The system of white supremacy is such that those with privilege do not even see their own advantages. And even if we say that we do not want to exclude anyone, we do so anyway because we are part of a larger system of exclusion. So she wondered how to organise the next conference more inclusively?

Second awakening

When she started planning the next conference 2016 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and tried to have a more diverse array of speakers, she visited Emigdio Ballon, a Bolivian farmer, who manages the farm at the Pueblo of Tesuque incorporating traditions from the pueblo as well as Indigenous farming practices from Bolivia, permaculture and biodynamics. There she had a second awakening: *"Again, it was something that on some level I knew, but of which I was not fully conscious. As I set foot for the very first time on a farm in a Native American community, the deep history of human connection to land*

in this place and all across the United States suddenly struck me. The arrival of biodynamics to the Pueblo of Tesuque was very recent, but growing food in sacred relationship with the land had been happening here for thousands of years.

Before European contact, the United States was home to many hundreds of distinct Indigenous peoples, each deeply connected to the land where they lived. Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muskogee Creek, Seminole, Seneca, Cayuga, Onandaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Anishanaabe, Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Lakota Sioux, Chayenne, Arapaho, Ponca, Pawnee, Osage, Kiowa, Shoshone, Bannok, Paiute, Ute, Tlingit, Salish, Maka, Hoopa, Pomo, Miwok, Karok, Yurok, Onasatis. These Indigenous peoples and hundreds of others who I have not named have had deeply spiritual and co-creative relationships with the land for at least 15,000 years... Native Americans have actively partnered with spirit in the soil, the plants, the animals. They have understood the relationships between the Earth and the cosmos and how those relationships affect work with the land. They created an amazing diversity of ways to care for people, for the health of all beings, for this planet Earth we all live on.

And the deeply tragic history of North America, and so many other places in the world, is that these vibrant and wise Indigenous ways of life and caring for the land have been deeply disrupted and sometimes obliterated by European colonialism starting about 500 years ago."

The way in which the indigenous people have been destroyed over the last 500 years is a major tragedy. The way that America was colonised followed the doctrine of Pope Alexander VI, who said that Christians all over the world had the right to take land and oppress the people, as long as these people were not Christians. This colonisation also spread to Africa, Asia and Oceania, with devastating consequences. In what became the USA the colonialists were very efficient in eliminating these tribes. The people were killed or died of diseases that were introduced. And those who survived had to endure terrible things. Until recently they were forbidden to practise their culture, language, etc.

When Thea Maria visited the biodynamic farm in this native Pueblo she experienced a great deal of vibrancy, but had also to acknowledge that much had been lost. She saw how difficult it was for these people to reconnect to their land after so many years of trauma. This farm was not at all typical of a biodynamic farm in America, so she saw it as being very important for the conference participants to visit it too. She was equally convinced of the importance for the people from this village to have the opportunity to take part in the conference. As Thea Maria explained, this conference 2016 "Tierra Viva: Farming the Living Earth," ended up being considerably more inclusive and diverse: *"The Governor of the Pueblo of Tesuque was invited to open the conference in the tradition-*



Claudia J. Ford, Orland Bishop, Jim Embry – Biodynamics, Indigeneity and Social Justice, USA, Photo: Biodynamic Association

al way of his people, and publicly acknowledged that the conference center where we were meeting was on Pueblo of Tesuque traditional land. A group of sixty people visited the Pueblo of Tesuque on a field day and collectively made and applied biodynamic tree paste to many of the trees in the farm's orchard. These actions were deeply meaningful. And yet, even at the 2016 conference there was still more for me to learn about human relationships and how they relate to biodynamic agriculture. Still more awakening that needed to happen in my heart..."

Third awakening

Thea Maria described how a third person invited her into awakening: Dr. Claudia J. Ford, a university professor and a researcher in Women's Studies, Environmental Literature, Environmental and Business Ethics. *"Claudia was one of the very small handful of people of color who participated in our 2014 conference, and she returned as a presenter in 2016, giving a workshop on the spirit of healing plants. I connected with Claudia toward the end of the Santa Fe conference, and she described to me how unwelcome many of the white conference participants had made her feel, with seemingly small comments and gestures that I now know are called microaggressions. Over the course of the five days of the conference, all those microaggressions added up to a tremendously challenging conference experience for her, and likely most or all of the other people of color participating as well.*

Claudia awakened me to the reality that it is not enough to just invite people to the table. That we also need to consider what their experience will be. That we also need to understand and account for the incredibly pervasive context of domination and oppression that permeates our culture, which, despite our ignorance or even best intentions, filters into every interaction, even at a Biodynamic Conference."

This conference was organised just one week after Donald Trump's election. His election campaign with its sexism and racism was a big shock for the members of the Biodynamic Association who worked on the topic of how social injustice is connected with the biodynamic work. Although the Association had begun to make connections between biodynamic and Indigenous agriculture, they also came to acknowledge that the eradication of the Native American inhabitants and the destruction of their indigenous culture are not the only tragedies: there is another one whose legacy is still present in the United States – slavery. In order to heal these wounds, it's important to acknowledge the great importance of the work of enslaved people in American agriculture. People were stolen and violently brought to the Americas from Africa in what was called the triangle of trade for four hundred years. They were enslaved to provide the labor to grow crops such as cotton, coffee, and sugar for the European countries who colonized the Americas. These people were chosen specifically for their agricultural knowledge and skills developed over countless generations in Africa. 30 million people were abducted from their homeland and brutally separated from their families. Slavery was only abolished in the US after a bloody four-year war. But after this there were new laws and policy which further limited the rights of Black people so that nowadays, for instance, Afro-Americans own less than one per cent of the land although they make up 14 per cent of the population. And there are many more injustices based on race and connected to agriculture that continue to be perpetuated into the present moment...

Thea Maria explained: *"It is very hard to hold all these tragedies in my heart. And for years, I pushed my knowledge of them away, because I thought it was too hard. I thought that I was powerless to do anything about these tragedies. I also did not realize the spiritual cost to my own humanity of ignoring these realities. But thanks to Jim Embry and Emigdio Ballon and Claudia Ford—and many others—I have come to see that recognizing, talking about, and working with the present-day legacies of all that has happened in the interwoven histories of people and land is an essential part of how we fulfill our mission to transform the practice and culture of agriculture. This is not about guilt or blame. This is not about labeling people as good or evil. This is about recognizing injustice and the deep wounds that are still alive in the soil and in the souls of human beings. This is about understanding that we all have a part to play in bringing healing and liberation to all of humanity and to the Earth."*

In response to this new challenge, the biodynamic association co-created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement * because we need to find ways to heal the wounds of the

past. The heart of biodynamics is to respect the dignity of each being. Thea Maria deeply believes that the biodynamic impulse, taking account of the spirit in agriculture, will develop a strong potential of healing forces. The history of every country is different, but the question is: do we know it? How is land ownership distributed? Are there injustices that we know about without really waking up to them? How are farm workers treated?

We know that biodynamic agriculture is a great impulse for healing that has the potential to transform our relationships: but our hearts need to be awake to this. For 500 years we have been living with the paradigm of globalisation, with Europe as the centre of the world and everything else secondary, and unintentionally maintain this eurocentricity. Biodynamic agriculture was born in Europe and if we are not careful, we are in danger of repeating the pattern of colonialism while working to bring biodynamics to the world. As part of our agricultural work, we need to take an interest not only in soils, plants and animals, but we need to become more and more interested in the people who we do not normally come across: the tools for doing this are humbleness, patience and listening.

To sum up the requested attitude, Thea Maria read this quotation from Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal elder, activist, and educator from Queensland, Australia: *"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."* That means that if we believe that we already have the solutions, that we only need to teach, then we have already lost. Every person has their own relationship to the earth and no one can judge how spiritual it is. Nowadays communities and the earth are so destroyed by climate change etc. that is it absolutely essential to develop a spiritual agriculture together. We have an unbelievable potential for transformation. But we will learn nothing if we remain in our comfort zone. There is a growing movement of integration between biodynamics and indigenous peoples, although the meetings and dialogue are not always easy.

Thea Maria closed her lecture by quoting the America verse from Steiner:

*"May our feeling penetrate into the center of our heart, and seek, in love, to unite itself with the human beings seeking the same goal, with the spirit beings who—bearing grace, strengthening us from realms of light, and illuminating our love—are gazing down upon our earnest, heartfelt striving."***

* www.biodynamics.com/content/biodynamic-association-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-statement

** See R. Steiner. *Mantric Sayings: Meditations 1903–1925*. Great Barrington: SteinerBooks, 2015. Ralph Courtney later became one of the founding members of the Biodynamic Association in the United States in 1938.



Biodynamic agriculture and its partners: Building bridges in eventful times

Dan McKanan



Dan McKanan is a professor at the Harvard Divinity School. An experienced observer of the biodynamic scene, he has written the book "Eco-Alchemy", in which he traces the history of the founding and development of biodynamic agriculture worldwide. His aim in doing so is to hold up a mirror to the biodynamic movement and indicate ways in which this movement can make a bigger impact in the world.

In his illuminating and very informative talk Dan McKanan showed by means of different interpretations of "history", how we as individuals and particularly as a movement should turn our attention to "what is in the air". This gives us opportunities to forge alliances with other groups who have similar intentions. As his first example, McKanan looked into the question of who had founded "solidarity farming". He had heard that this were biodynamic farmers. But later he realised that this question could not be answered so simply. Because this impulse was in the air – in the spiritual realm. And if different groups recognise or have recognised this fact, this could lead to the

creation of strong alliances that could even build bridges across the divide of social classes and groups. As already described by Thea Maria Carlson in her talk, we should be aware of the fact that our agriculture has developed in part on the exploitation, humiliation and even eradication of other groups of people (in the USA for example the indigenous peoples and the blacks). We have to acknowledge this in order to be able to look to the future together. Using examples of the history of American agriculture and the development of biodynamic agriculture in Europe, McKanan showed how important it is to look at history in its specific context of time and place. He made a plea for the biodynamic movement to learn to make better phenomenological observations of what is happening at the social level – something it does very well with nature – so that, on the basis of these observations, it can network more closely with other movements in civil society. He ended his talk with the statement that "there is a spiritual revolution in the air and we are called upon to listen and take part in it."

The English language original available at <https://bit.ly/2U6pkan>. Highly recommended.

Breathing with the Climate Crisis

ecologically – socially – spiritually

Climate change is a reality. We experience it on our farms. Anyone who works with nature has to cope with extreme weather situations nowadays. We are confronted by either withered crops or soils washed away by heavy rainfall. Cattle farming can be like walking a tightrope if the pastures dry out. The water table sinks, springs dry up. The woodlands are dotted with dead trees.

Climate change? For years we have been asking ourselves whether this is a change in the climate or just extreme weather. Is it all exaggerated? Will the computer simulated predictions actually prove true? Perhaps or perhaps not. But the fact is that we are now affected. We are increasingly aware of how the atmospheric envelope is intimately bound up with the whole organism of the earth. Above the earthy humus layer the earth's air and warmth layers breathe. No one has knowingly or deliberately changed something there. Climate change seems to approach us from outside. The periphery, which we were not even aware of, speaks to us: Hey people, wake up!

Whose voice is this? Is it actually ours? We sense that we are not just isolated separate individuals on the earth. We also exist beyond this point, the periphery belongs to us. We have, as it were, a peripheral self. This is an experience in two steps. First, I also exist in the periphery, so that I along with all other people make up the human race, directly, without any distinction of culture, language or background. Secondly, I am responsible, we are responsible for "the whole". Is this really true? Waking up to this knowledge is a shock. Is there really any point in being on this earth, can the earth actually bear my footprint? And for the climate youth, climate change has become a climate crisis and they demand a change to the system.

We come to an expanded concept of the change that is demanded of us: climate change – in the environmental dimension, the social dimension, and the spiritual dimension. How can we get our breath back in these three dimensions: a refreshing breath on the earth, a trusting breath in society, a liberating breath as an individual human being?

Climate change in an environmental sense means we must treat the resources of the earth differently, we must understand the agricultural organism not just from inside but from outside, from the climate issue, from a view of the living organism of the earth. How can we capture the

excess carbon in the atmosphere in the life cycles of our farms?

Climate change in a social sense means that the social climate in many countries is at breaking point, as it is in the international community. What is the way forward in Bolivia, Chile, Lebanon, Hong Kong, England, France,... and everywhere, in our communities? How can we reach future-oriented social forms where the human dignity of each individual can be upheld by the community?

Understanding climate change spiritually means developing a new experience of the "I". The "I" is not complete, but develops. And this happens in a dialogue. In a dialogue with another I, with the world, with its own higher self. As a being amongst beings. Not as an ego. How can we arrive at a spiritual climate that enables individuals in dialogue with the world to grow beyond themselves?

The Section for Agriculture and the Youth Section are joint organisers of the Agricultural Conference 2021. It is planned as a conference on earth, climate, culture.

Agriculture Conference 2021

Breathing with the Climate Crisis –
ecologically – socially – spiritually

Annual International Conference of the biodynamic movement, Goetheanum Dornach, Switzerland.

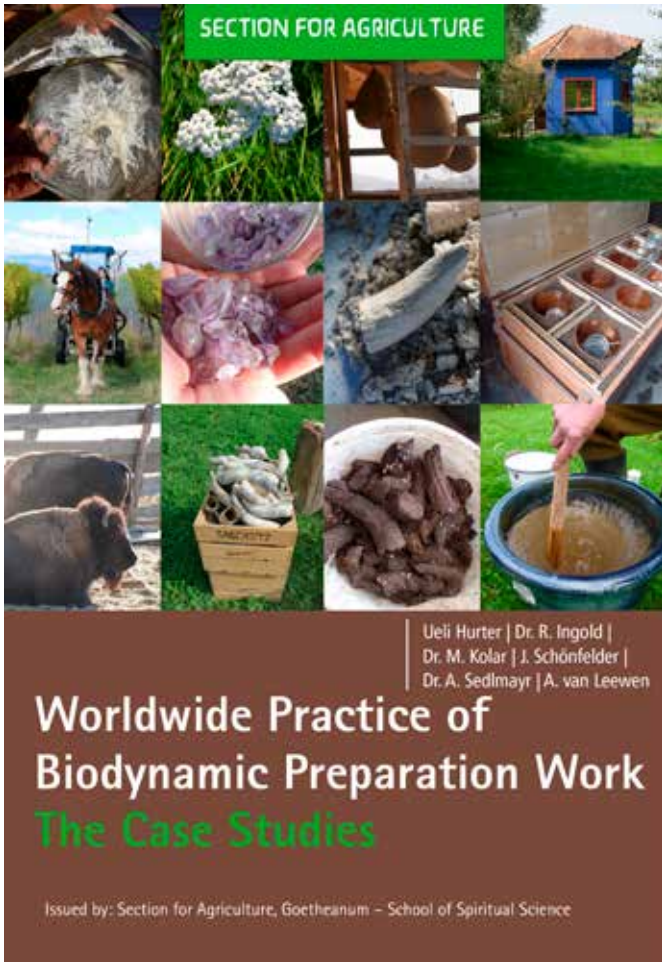
Thursday 11 February until Sunday 14 February 2021

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- Erde und Mensch (Guenther Wachsmuth)
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- The Limits to Growth (Dennis L. Meadows, Donella Meadows, Jørgen Randers, William W. Behrens III)
- Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration (Will Steffen)
- Der periphere Blick: Die Vervollständigung der Aufklärung (Wolfgang Schad)



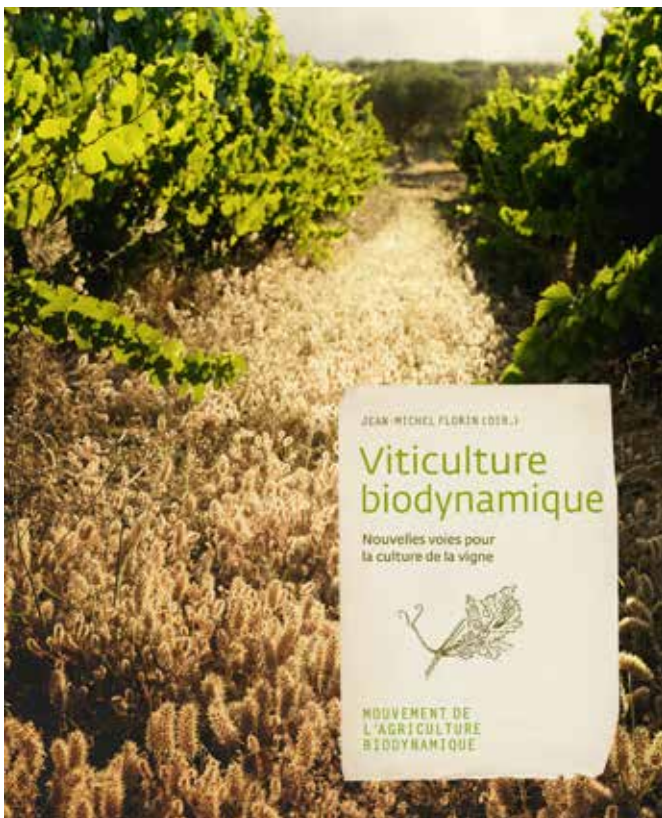
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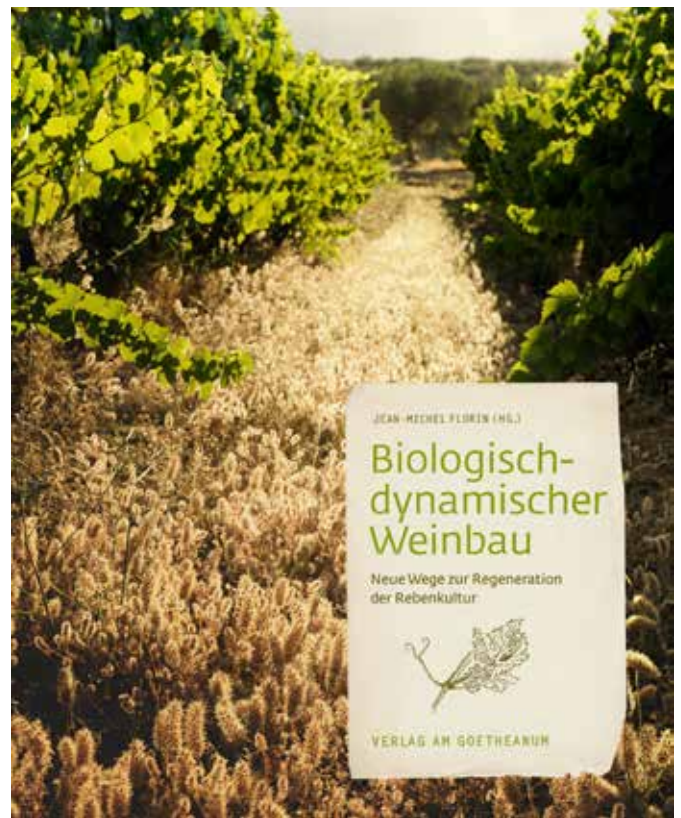
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