



Theme for 2022/23

Evolving agriculture

100 years of biodynamics: looking back to look forwards

Reviewing 99 years of the "Koberwitz impulse"

In 2024 we will be able to look back over 100 years since the Agricultural Course was held as the founding moment of the biodynamic impulse. In the centenary year 2024, the Agriculture Conference will focus fully on the material of this Course, on the great and profound images that inspire us. The working title is "The human being becomes the foundation". But there also needs to be a review, so this is planned for the 2023 conference, as well as a preview of the future for the 2025 conference. This gives us a trilogy of themes for the years and the conferences around the 100-year jubilee: a review in 2023, the current impulse in 2024 and the future outlook in 2025.

We therefore want to look backwards with the theme of the year 2022/23 and the 2023 conference in order to gather strength for the forces of renewal. The most straightforward way to do this is to ask: where do I come from? How did I find my way to agriculture? What experience in my biography sparked my interest in biodynamics? Was there someone whose words influenced me to feel called to work on the earth? And who was it who inspired this person? Perhaps by following this thread we can even find a direct link to those who were present at the Agriculture Course.

This type of review can also be done for each country. How did the impulse arrive in my country, how has it developed? How far back does the history of the association in which I am involved go, and how far that of the regional working group? Who founded Demeter? Who were the people involved with Rudolf Steiner in developing associative economics? What about research? Did it develop from the course, or did it have earlier roots? Who do we encounter when reviewing the topic of nutrition? What phases have we passed through in terms of impact on the public?

And all this can bring us to the question: how has the spiritual source of biodynamics remained alive in the countless people who have achieved all this? What approaches to these sources have they fostered? And finally, how can I be inspired by this? What is my way of approaching the source of biodynamics and how do I cultivate this? What do I feel to be my personal contribution to the further development of the biodynamic impulse?

A review of the cultural development of agriculture

Of course agriculture did not start with the Agriculture Course. It is very much older, so it is worth putting the biodynamic impulse into the context of the whole situation. How has agriculture developed over the centuries or even millennia? History teaches us that, on the one hand, it has been hard work in the struggle with the rigours of nature and in servitude to the authorities. But, on the other hand, we learn that farming cultivates nature through domesticating animals, breeding plants and producing fertile soil; that it creates cultural landscapes in regions of similar climate. We can feel addressed in the depths of our being when we connect to the diversity of agricultural impulses throughout the ages. For example, with the indigenous practices of an intimate relationship with nature; with the behaviour towards holy cows in India; with the cultivation of wheat seed over many generations originating in the Middle East; or the development of the milpa cultivation system – maize, beans and squash – by the advanced civilizations of South America right up to the present day. We learn that, in this development, agriculture has had repeated phases of self-determination, social involvement or even patronage for cultural progress. The phases of healthy agricultural development were always culturally inspired, and cultural development was in turn inspired and supported by agriculture.

So, in the sometimes extremely exciting history of agriculture, we gradually come to recognise the basic question: what is the relationship between man and the earth? In the different periods of history, what is the significance of our relationship to the earth for our human existence and development? This historical consciousness viewpoint of the evolution of agriculture can ultimately reveal a sense of and ideas about the stage we have now reached, in fact the stage I have personally reached. It can also point to which evolutionary tasks we – as a whole movement – are charged with, now and in the immediate future.

Rudolf Steiner: The Condition of the Human Soul before the Dawn of the Michael Age. Leading Thoughts 85-87.

(In: Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts, GA 26)