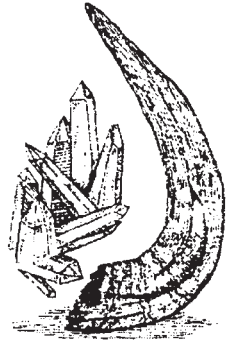


Applied **BIODYNAMICS®**



Winter, 2006–2007

Newsletter of the Josephine Porter Institute • Woolwine, Virginia

Issue No. 55

The Washing of the Feet

Christian Morgenstern

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

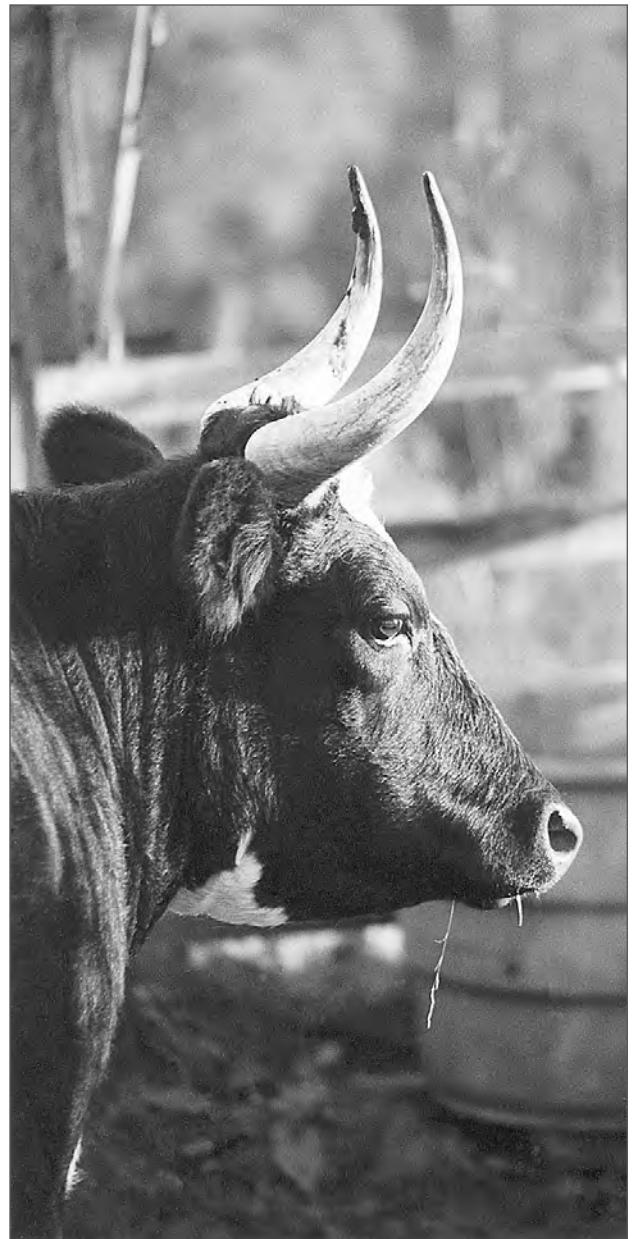
I give you thanks, green grass and flower,
And stoop in reverence before you.
You let me win the beast's swift power.

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

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

Thanks flows from all the gods and lands,
And from each god again expands.
In thanks all being joins its hands.

Translated by Arvia MacKaye



Notes

In a fit of optimism, almost totally devoid of reality, I assigned to myself the task of this particular issue of *Applied Biodynamics*. Shortly after that assignment, JPI went through another period of chaos and upheaval. We had as previously noted, lost the editorial services of Patricia Smith. At the end of August, I received the news that Catherine Kazlo, who had been holding down the JPI office tasks in a very helpful way, had accepted a request from her former boss at Harlemville to return to assist him in the store operation. Within a few days of Catherine's scheduled departure, Matthew Baker and Osiris Abrego came to me with the news that they, too, were leaving, to visit biodynamic operations in India and the West Coast. The sudden departure of three people in such a short span of time left JPI with a substantial amount of unfinished work, which put me in a situation where certain aspects of other tasks (including this issue of the newsletter) at JPI had to take a back seat.

Fortunately, I was soon able to enlist the services of my grandson, Jeremiah Courtney and his father, Mark Proctor, to take up a number of the most essential tasks here at JPI, especially those associated with the making of the preparations. They were able to resurrect many gallons of Barrel Compost and put down several thousand BD #500 cow horns with an efficiency and work ethic that JPI was blessed to receive.

It was also during this period that JPI engaged the services of a nearby resident of Woolwine, Cindi Courter, as a

consultant for various projects that, as Executive Director, I simply could not find the necessary time to undertake. One of the first of those projects, was a fund raising effort that with her background and experience, Cindi was well qualified to undertake. Periodically, we will continue to use her capable talents as our resources permit in several other projects which will be reported on in the future.

Almost simultaneously, I had a request from Joey Brinkley and his fiancée, Natalie Coles, to come to JPI to learn more about the making of the preparations and about biodynamic agriculture. We were fortunate to have them be able to attend our fall preparation making session and then to come to JPI on the first of December. They had just spent the previous months working at Grgich Hills Cellar (a significant user of JPI's preparations) in California, and although they had a serious offer to continue there, they both decided that Virginia was where they wanted to be. Since Joey had spent the previous year working at a CSA in Kentucky with Paul Bela and Robin Verson, I knew his interest in biodynamics was serious. Joey and I had also been introduced to each other some time previously through our mutual friend "Beau" Johnson, whose passing a few years ago took from this earthly plane a strong supporter of JPI and biodynamics. One could surmise that "Beau" is contributing his support from the other side.

All in all, each period of chaos that we experience at JPI, seems to bring us further ahead than we were before the upheaval took place.

—Hugh Courtney

Applied Biodynamics

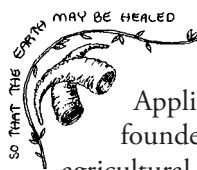
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Mission

The Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI), was founded to produce quality biodynamic agricultural preparations based on the spiritual-scientific research of Rudolf Steiner.

It serves as a living memorial to Josephine Porter, a pioneer for this work in America.

The mission of JPI also includes education and research in biodynamic agriculture. JPI undertakes these tasks so that the earth may be healed.

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Honoring The Cow

Hugh J. Courtney

Each year when we are preparing for the harvest of the several bovine sheaths used for the making of the biodynamic preparations, we choose to observe the solemnity of the occasion by leading the participants in what has become a ritual tradition here at the Josephine Porter Institute.

We all gather the night before the slaughter and read several passages from one of Rudolf Steiner's most profound descriptions of the meaning of the animal kingdom in human and "Earth" evolution. After sharing his words, we end with a reading of Christian Morgenstern's poem "Washing of the Feet." A visit is then made to the barnyard where the chosen animal is then silently blessed and thanked by all. The following morning, a smudging ceremony is also often performed. It is remarkable that at the moment of slaughter, the cow actually presents herself in a gesture of sacrifice as if to say she understands the need far better than do any of the human participants in the event. It is to be noted that Steiner is said to have described that the only time that a member of the animal kingdom can express ego or say "I" of itself is at the moment of death. So that our readers may also share in our "tradition," we present the essential words gifted by Steiner in the following article "Honoring the Cow."

One of the stumbling blocks for the sensitive individual when coming to biodynamic agriculture is the requirement to use various animal parts, particularly from the cow, an animal held sacred in human history by many peoples and even to the present day in India by those practicing the Hindu religion. Adherents of the animal rights movements are inclined to view any animal slaughter with particular revulsion, and strict vegetarians are often of the same view. How

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

BD #500 – Horn Manure

BD #501 – Horn Silica

BD #502 – Yarrow

BD #503 – Chamomile

BD #504 – Stinging Nettle

BD #505 – Oak Bark

BD #506 – Dandelion

BD #507 – Valerian

BD #508 – Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

Compost
Preparations

does the biodynamic practitioner overcome their objections to the use of the various parts which must be harvested from a dead cow, most often from one just freshly slaughtered?

It is probable that one of the contributing factors to these objections to the slaughter of an animal lies in the present-day avoidance of any discussion of the subject of death in modern society. In the first place, it is important to recognize that nothing lives forever. As simple-minded as such a statement may be, many a human being in this day and age prefers to deny this fact, especially when applied to them. The transference of this denial is easily extended to the animal kingdom when we have been conditioned to view ourselves simply as a more advanced animal, thanks largely to Darwin's theory of evolution as it plays out in our current system of education. It is particularly helpful to shine the light of Rudolf Steiner's spiritual scientific research to this concern over an animal slaughter. Steiner points out that it is only the human being that is possessed of an Ego, and that the ego of members of the animal kingdom actually resides in the spiritual world in the form of a 'group soul.' The death of an individual animal, or in the instance under consideration, the individual cow, is of no more concern to the group soul of the species cow, than the cutting of the hair or trimming of the nails is for an individual human being.

Of much greater help when dealing with the question of slaughtering a cow is the magnificent picture of the animal kingdom, and particularly, the cow, which Steiner provides us in the lecture series he gave in October and November 1923, well before the Agriculture Course held in June 1924. My first acquaintance with this lecture series goes back to its publication under the title *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*, and it was described to me by one biodynamic practitioner, Clifford Kurz, as volume two of the Agriculture Course, even though it was presented before that course. These lectures are currently published under the title *Harmony of the Creative Word*.

Man as Synthesis of Eagle, Lion, and Ox/Cow

Steiner examines three representative members of the animal kingdom and their relationship to the human kingdom. Of special note is his description of the debt that the human owes to the animal kingdom, with none greater than the debt that the human being owes to the cow. While I will attempt to excerpt the most meaningful statements that Steiner makes in these lectures to give a capsule view, please bear in mind that those statements will be removed

from context. I would highly recommend to anyone a thorough reading of these lectures.

The first representative of the animal kingdom Steiner addresses is the bird, specifically the eagle as an archetypal representative. In order to gain a “true picture, for instance, of the bird’s etheric body,” an awakened imagination will reveal that “the etheric bird is nothing but a head.” It is “Under the influence of the sun’s rays” that the bird “has received its plumage.” The “sun also has non-physical powers” and it is these powers which “give the different species of birds their rich and varied colours and specific form of plumage.” This sun force “is the same principle that makes the human brain the vehicle for thought.” Steiner further states that, “The power that creates the convolutions of the human brain and enables it to take up the inner salt force that provides the basis for the faculty of thought also gives the eagle in the air its feathers.” In the bird kingdom, this sun force manifests in the physical aspect of feathers, whereas in the human being, these powers “on the astral plane . . . give rise to thoughts.”

Next, Steiner takes a look at a second representative of the animal kingdom when he considers a mammal, choosing the lion as an archetypal example. There is no other animal

except the lion and those related to it which “has such a wonderful, mysterious breathing process.” It is in the lion that “a kind of balance exists between breathing and circulation.” Although the heaviness of the digestive process weighs down the lion’s circulation, this does not happen to the tremendous degree that is found in the case of the cow. With the lion and its short digestive tract, the entire digestive process is completed very quickly. “In lions, more than in any other animal, the inner rhythms of breathing and heartbeat are in inner balance and harmony.” The lion has a ravenous appetite “because it is part of their nature that hunger causes them much more pain than it causes other animals.” Lions will find “inner satisfaction in the even rhythms of their breathing and circulation.” It is at the point “when the food has passed over into the blood which regulates the heartbeat,” that they are “wholly lion when they experience the deep inner satisfaction of the blood beating upwards and of the breath pulsing downwards.” Within the human being, it is the head that most resembles the bird, and it is the chest “where the rhythms of circulation and breathing meet” that most resembles the lion. Steiner does not subsequently address the relationship of the lion to the human being in the same way as he does with the other representatives of the animal kingdom as will be seen later.

How the Cow Supports Human and Earth Evolution

When Steiner examines a third representative of the animal kingdom, “the ox or cow,” the entire form of the cow, he concludes “is in fact what I may call a complete and utter digestive system!” In examining the cow from an astral perspective, Steiner says: “What the bird up in the heights has by way of astrality out of its astral body, something that is working, as I have said, to shape the plumage, is something the cow has taken into flesh, muscle and bone. Something that is astral in the bird has become physical in the cow.” Steiner further describes the cow’s digestive processes relative to astrality as follows:

. . . it is part of the digestive process in the cow to develop a wonderful astrality. The cow becomes beautiful in the process of digestion. Seen in its astral aspect, this digestive process has something infinitely beautiful. In the light of ordinary bourgeois notions, bourgeois ideas of perfection, the business of digestion is the lowest of the low. Yet one is proved utterly wrong in this once a higher point of view is achieved and one sees the digestive process in the cow with the eye of the spirit. It is beautiful, it is magnificent, it is something of a tremendously spiritual nature.

Within the human being, the one-sided “physical embodiment of a certain astral element,” which develops in the



digestive system of the cow, is to be found “in the human digestive organs and their continuation in the limbs. . . .” The three separate configurations found in the eagle (human head), the lion (human chest) and the cow (human digestive system and the limbs) are “united into one and in harmony and balance in the human being.” Steiner asks us to “contemplate these things and realize again that man is actually born out of the whole of nature” that, indeed: “Man is a microcosm . . . man is synthesis of eagle, lion and ox or cow.”

Our attention is drawn to Mahatma Gandhi, and Steiner states that the “remarkable phenomenon is that he has actually retained the veneration of the cow in his rationalized Hinduism. . . . [Gandhi] still retains the veneration of the cow.” This veneration of the cow

. . . can only be understood when one is aware of the inner connections, when one really knows the tremendous secrets that lie in the ruminating animal, in the cow. Then we can understand why people come to venerate in the cow a sublime astrality that has, as it were, become earthly, and only in this respect more lowly.

It is through our examination of these various representatives of the animal kingdom that Steiner hopes that we can “see how will, feeling and thought can be looked for outside in the cosmos, and correspondingly in the microcosm of the human being.”

Steiner continues with a further elaboration of the cow in relation to earthly forces, especially the force of gravity: The cow is the animal of digestion. It is moreover, the animal which accomplishes digestion in such a way that there lies in its digestive processes the earthly reflection of something actually super-earthly; its whole digestive process is permeated with an astrality which reflects the entire cosmos in a wonderful light-filled way. There is . . . a whole world in this astral organism of the cow, but everything is based on gravity. . . . Every day the cow must metabolize an eighth of her weight. This binds the cow with its material substance to the earth; yet through its astrality it is at the same time an image of the heights, of the cosmos.

Substance and Forces – Physical and Spiritual

In the third lecture of the cycle, Steiner presents a concept which requires us to distinguish between physical and spiritual substance as well as between physical and spiritual forces. While it takes a bit of effort to wrap one’s mind around this concept, it leads to a greater depth of understanding of the role that the animal kingdom, and especially the cow, plays in allowing the human being to



continue to evolve. A condensed version of this concept in Steiner’s own words is as follows:

The physical matter of the earth is part of everything that exists on earth. . . . let us call this matter the physical substance of the earth, comprising all that provides the material basis for the various earthly forms; and then let us differentiate from it everything in the universe which is the opposite of physical substance, namely spiritual substance. . . .

It is not right to speak only of physical matter or physical substance. . . . When we look upon what is earthly we become aware of physical substance; when we look upon what is outside the earthly we become aware of spiritual substance.

Today people know little of spiritual substance. That is why they speak of the earth being who belongs in both the physical and the spiritual world – the human being – as though he too, only possessed physical substance. This however is not the case.

Steiner continues:

We only speak correctly about the human being when we regard the so-called lower part of human nature as having as its basis what is in fact spiritual substance.

. . . The lower man actually shows us a formation



in spiritual substance, and the more we go towards the human head, the more the human being is made of physical substance. . . . physical substance is to be found particularly in the human head. Spiritual substance, on the other hand, is spread out in a particularly beautiful way just where – if I may put it so – man extends his arms and legs into space. . . . In a form such as man possesses, however, we must differentiate not only the substance, but also the forces. . . .

In the case of forces, things are exactly the opposite. In the limbs and metabolism the substance is spiritual but the forces are physical, for instance the force of gravity in the legs. In the head the substance is physical but the forces active within it are spiritual. . . . Man can in fact only be understood when he is regarded in this way, as composed of physical and spiritual substantiality and of physical and spiritual dynamics.

Spiritualizing the Earth: Humanity's Debt to the Animal Kingdom

Steiner then goes on to place this in perspective with re-

gard to the debt that the human being owes to the world:

Someone who . . . knows this secret of the human being . . . must acknowledge himself as a tremendous debtor to the world. . . . He is continuously withdrawing something from the earth. And he finds himself obliged to say that the spiritual substance which as man he bears within himself during earthly existence is actually needed by the earth. When man passes through death, he should in fact leave this spiritual substance behind him for the earth, for the earth continuously needs spiritual substance for its renewal. But this man cannot do, for he would then be unable to traverse his human path through the period after death. He must take this spiritual substance with him for the life between death and a new birth; he needs it, for he would disappear, so to speak, after death if he did not take this spiritual substance with him.

Only by taking the spiritual substance of his limbs and metabolism through the gate of death can man undergo the transformations which he must there undergo. He would be unable to be subject to future

incarnations if he were to give back to the earth the spiritual substance which he owes to it. This he cannot do. He remains a debtor. . . .

A similar problem exists with respect to the head organism of the human being, and Steiner tells us that:

. . . Because throughout the entire course of earthly life spiritual forces are working in the physical substance of the head, this head substance becomes estranged from the earth. . . . [Man] must also, in order to be man, continually imbue this substance of his head with extra-terrestrial forces. And when the human being dies, this is something extremely disturbing to the earth, because it must now take back the substance of the human head which has become so foreign to it. When the human being has gone through the gate of death and yields up his head substance to the earth, then this head substance – which is now spiritualized and bears within itself what results from the spiritual – does in fact act as a poison, as a really disturbing element in the totality of the life of the earth. . . . if man were to take this spiritualized earth substance with him, he would continually create something adverse to all his development between death and a new birth. It would be the most terrible thing that could happen to man if he were to take this spiritualized head substance with him. It would work incessantly on the negation of his spiritual development between death and rebirth.

One must therefore acknowledge, when one sees into the truth of these things, that here too man becomes a debtor to the earth; for something for which he is indebted to the earth but has made useless for it, this he must continuously leave behind, he cannot take it with him. What man should leave for the earth he takes from it; what man should take with him, what he has made useless for the earth, this he gives over to it with his earthly dust, thus causing the earth immense suffering in the wholeness of its life, the wholeness of its being.

It is at this point that Steiner tells us how the kingdoms of nature provide the remedies for the human failures and shortcomings outlined above. The eagle, with its feathers which have received spiritual forces from the sun and the rest of the cosmos, because it does not reincarnate, is able when it dies to give over “spiritualized earthly matter” to spirit land and it is changed back into spiritual substance.

After death, as Steiner explains, the “spiritualized physical matter of the eagle’s nature flies into the distance in order to unite itself with the spiritual substance of spirit land.”

In addressing the contribution of the cow, Steiner points

Nature Spirits and the Cow

In *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*, Rudolf Steiner also beautifully describes for us the relationship of the cow to the elemental beings in the following:

beneath a grazing herd of cattle, the earth is quickened to joyful vigorous life, and the elemental spirits down there rejoice because they are assured of their nourishment from the cosmos through the existence of the creatures grazing above them.

Steiner continues with this picture of the role of the cow:

We would see that remarkable aura of the cow which is in such marked contrast to earthly existence because it is entirely cosmic; we would see the lively merriment in the senses of the elemental earth spirits, who are able to perceive what has been lost to them because they are sentenced to live out their existence in the darkness of the earth. For these spirits what appears in the cow is Sun. The elemental spirits whose dwelling place is in the earth cannot rejoice in the physical sun, but they can rejoice in the astral bodies of the animals which chew the cud.

out the cow’s similarity to the human metabolic system and further enlightens us as to the significance of the cow:

The cow is the animal of digestion. And strange as it sounds, this animal of digestion consists essentially of spiritual substance into which the physical matter consumed is merely scattered and diffused. There in the cow you have the spiritual substance . . . and physical substance penetrates here everywhere and is absorbed, digested by the spiritual substance. It is in order that this may happen in a really thorough way that the process of digestion is so thorough and comprehensive in the cow. It is really the most thorough digestive process that can be conceived, and in this respect – if I may put it so – the cow is really most thorough in the business of being an animal. It is thoroughly animal and actually brings animal nature – this animal egoism, this animal egoity – down to earth from the universe and into the sphere of earth’s gravity.

No other animal has the same relation between blood-weight and total body weight as the cow; other animals have either less or more blood than the cow in proportion to the weight of the body. Weight has to do



with gravity and the blood with egoity; not with the ego, for this is only possessed by man, but with egoity, with individual existence. The blood also makes the animal an animal – the higher animal at least. And we might say that the cow has solved the world problem as to the right relation between the weight of the blood and the weight of the whole body – if one wishes to be as thoroughly animal as possible.

Steiner then reminds us that the cow with its “twelfth part of body weight in the weight of her blood” bears an exact relationship to the twelvefold division of the zodiac which the ancients referred to as ‘the circle of animal figures.’ All other animals have a different proportion of blood to body weight, and for the human being, “the blood is one thirteenth of the body weight.” Steiner tells us: “You see, the cow aims to express the whole of animal nature in terms of weight, to bring something cosmic to expression in the most thorough way possible. . . . Everything to do with the cow is of such a nature that the forces of the earth are worked into spiritual substance.”

Finally, Steiner identifies for us the contribution of the cow to the future of the earth:

When the cow dies the spiritual substance which it bears within it can be taken up by the earth together with the earthly matter to benefit the life of the whole earth. And man is right when he feels in regard to the cow: You are the true beast of sacrifice, for essentially you continually give to the earth what it needs, without which it could not continue to exist and would harden and dry up. You continually give spiritual substance to the earth and renew the inner mobility, the inner living quality of the earth.

Steiner goes on to speak of the “remarkable contrast” between the eagle and the cow:

the eagle which, when it dies, takes away into the expanses of spirit land the earth matter that has become spiritualized and therefore useless for the earth; and the cow which, when it dies, gives heavenly matter to the earth for its renewal. The eagle takes from the earth what the earth can no longer use, what must return to spirit land. The cow carries into the earth what the earth continually needs as forces of renewal from spirit land.

Placing this awareness into perspective, Steiner states, And now you will wonder even less that a religious world conception which penetrates so deeply into the spiritual as does Hinduism venerates the cow, for it is the animal which continually spiritualizes the earth and continually gives to the earth that spiritual substance which it has taken from the cosmos.

When the biodynamic practitioner approaches the harvesting of the various preparation sheath materials from the cow at slaughter, it needs to be done with total reverence toward the incredible significance the cow has for the entire earth which we are given in this magnificent picture that Rudolf Steiner places before us.

In using the several parts of the cow when we make the biodynamic preparations, we are, in a real sense, entering into the role of priest in bringing the spiritual substance of the cow to an even higher state of being in the final product of the biodynamic preparations. Alex Podolinsky has described the making of the preparations as “the only true sacrament” in the world today.

Notes

- 1) Rudolf Steiner, *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word* (Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1991), pp. 14–20, 22–23, 31–32, 44–55.



On the Harvesting of the Preparation Sheaths

When the biodynamic practitioner is confronted with the objections raised by some vegetarians or those immersed in the animal rights movement, it may be helpful to remind them that if one completely removes the animal kingdom from its contribution to agriculture, then there is a substantial danger that our food supply will disappear. Some years ago, Maria Thun was challenged by a vegan vegetarian acquaintance to grow food organically for him but without using anything which derived from an animal source. That is, no animal manure could be used on the growing beds, nor could any of the biodynamic preparations be used other than stinging nettle (BD #504), valerian (BD #507) and *Equisetum arvense* (BD #508). Vegetable matter compost was, of course, available, but it was not made with any of the biodynamic preparations whose production involved an animal sheath. An adjacent area growing similar crops was treated biodynamically.

It is interesting that Maria Thun approached this problem from a more complete and holistic scientific perspective by using seed saved from each of these plots to plant back on the plots in the following years. The net result of this experiment was that by the end of the third year, some of the seeds from the “vegetarian” plot had lost viability, and by the end of the fifth year, the experiment had to be ended because most of the seed from the animal-free plot was no longer capable of producing a crop.¹

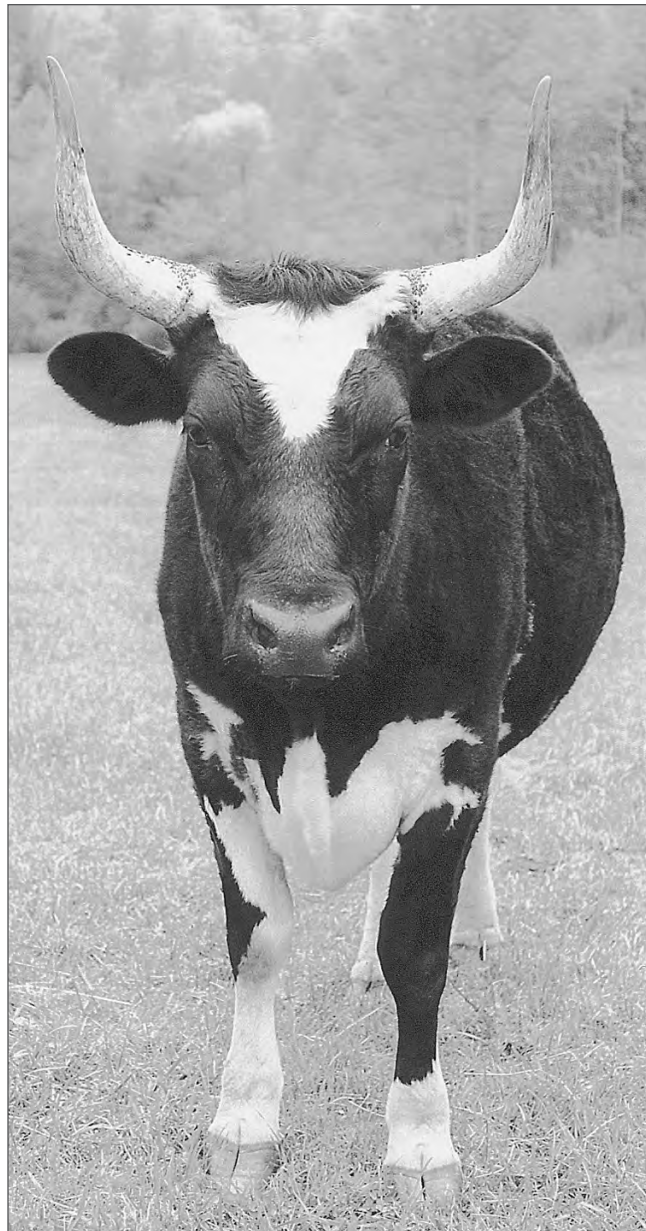
If one tries to separate out the animal influence from the growing of our food, then the consequences may well be that in a short period of time we will not be able to grow food. Of course, the vegetarian “purist” can still grow crops organically, but only by the hypocrisy of obtaining seeds from a source which does not exclude the animal from its seed production. Such an approach would allow one to continue their purist approach but only by denying the reality of the situation.

In the light of what Steiner says of the sacrifice of the cow and the need that the earth may have for the spiritual substance it receives upon the death of the cow, one could wonder that there might not have been a higher spiritual purpose accomplished by the tremendous slaughter of cattle that took place as a consequence of the threat of hoof and mouth disease as well as mad cow disease in England and Europe a few years ago. Does the animal kingdom undergo these sacrifices because we as human beings are not doing our job of “spiritualizing the earth” through the use of the biodynamic preparations? Are we looking at something similar in the massive poultry slaughters associated with the fear of bird flu? Is such sacrifice necessary because

spirit land is starving since we human beings can provide it only with the “junk food” of our materialistic thinking?

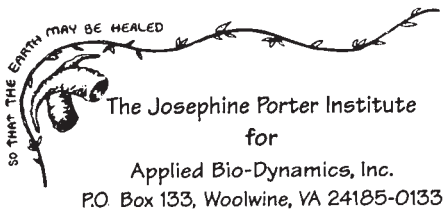
Notes

- 1) Description of this experiment was found in an earlier edition of *Working with the Stars* by Maria Thun, (Edinburgh: Floris Books), but the exact issue could not be located at this time.



“The cow becomes beautiful in the process of digestion.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*, Lecture 1, p. 20



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