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News From The Farm

Aspen Moon Farm: Hope, Passion, and a Bit of Crazy
Growing the Sense Organ of the Farm

From the Editor

Martin Shaw is an eloquent mythologist and storyteller. He uses language that springs to life as soon as he gives it voice. In his most recent book, *Smoke Hole*, written during the Covid lockdowns, he explores the possibility, even the necessity, of creating a new cultural story—a new myth enabling humanity to deeply come to understand itself and so better steer through the waters of the unparalleled years we suspect we will be facing up ahead. Many philosophers, astrologers, spiritual adepts, and others before Shaw predicted such a time when the ground rules would change and the spiral of a new era begin. Steiner was one of them, anticipating that the deep need for anthroposophy would increase approximately 100 years after World War I—essentially now.

Rudolf Steiner's understanding of the story of humanity and how it might meet the challenge of these days was both vast and long, enumerated in numerous lectures containing complex timelines. Insights achieved through the practice of spiritual science gave him an understanding of the story that Shaw and others may still be searching for.

The question that bubbles up in response: How do we internalize the guidance—agricultural, medical, epistemological, spiritual—left to us by Steiner so as to enliven more than the land we are stewards of? How do we use it to transform our

internal landscapes so that we are not solely acted upon by the forces outside ourselves but become soul-focused co-creators with the higher orders of life that Steiner envisioned?

It is questions such as these that Stewart Lundy asks in “Growing the Sense-Organ of the Farm: Thoughts from Philosophy of Freedom.” This launches an occasional series that inquires into the nature of freedom as Steiner challenged us to understand it.

In addition, we feature Aspen Moon Farm outside of Boulder, Colorado, the creation of Erin Dreistadt and Jason Griffith. Theirs is a community focused, biodynamic and organic farm with vegetables so lovely that all I wanted to do was take pictures of their produce when I lived in that region.

In other news, Mike Biltonen catches us up on what changes are occurring at JPI. See “News From The Farm.”

Astrology teaches that cycles are long, that they repeat, and that, in repeating, they spiral in and out of each other like replicating strands of DNA, with each spiral building on the others as they lead us on. For Steiner, the end game of this process is human evolution based in Freedom. May we nurture our inner resources so that we choose to move toward this freedom and, in so doing, to fully activate the goodness of the human story.

Mary Maruca

Applied Biodynamics

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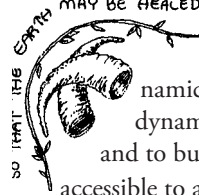
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Front cover: Red dahlias remind us that the seasons are changing toward fall and that Archangel Michael with his mighty sword governs this time. The dahlias are one of many beautiful arrangements of biodynamically grown flowers from Aspen Moon. Photo by Aspen Moon Farm.

Mission



The mission of the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics, Inc. is to heal the Earth through Biodynamic preparations, research and education, and to build a dynamic network so our legacy is accessible to all future generations.

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News From the Farm—A Fall Update

Mike Biltonen

Greetings everyone. I'm happy to report that this year is the first year we've had since 2019 without significant issues surrounding Covid-19, allowing JPI to resume on-farm visitation and workshops. We all hope that trend continues. That said, although we are almost 8 months into the "new" year it feels as though the year has only just started. This year has been filled with behind the scenes transformations where everyone at JPI is participating in setting the foundation for a very eventful 2023.

The most important part of any organization are the people that make it up. At JPI we have a strong team of dedicated and passionate people working to fulfill the promise of biodynamics. Larry Mabe, who has been with JPI for almost 22 years, leads this team and guides all preparation making activities. Winter Hart plays a key role in all farm activities, including preparation making, sales fulfillment, and farm beautification. James Wade is taking on a role as preparation apprentice in a big way. He assists Larry, as does everyone, in making the largest available quantity of high-quality preparations in North America. Cedar Kayrum recently joined the team as the office manager, but also participates in field activities and preparation making as she immerses herself into the world of biodynamic agriculture.

Over at our publication, *Applied Biodynamics*, Stewart Lundy is bringing new energy and light to the depth of our biodynamic underpinnings by expanding and growing our community presence through *Applied Biodynamics* and social media. Last but not least, Mary Maruca and Bruce Bumbarger help bring the publication to life as managing editor and layout editor respectively. I have worked with Mary and Bruce for almost 6 years now as the publication grows and evolves from



mere newsletter to a true voice of the organization and the biodynamic movement. Without the team's thoughtful and inspirational work, *Applied Biodynamics* would be just another newsletter. All in all, right now is my most exciting time at JPI. The team is growing, energy is building around workshops and research, and, of course, there are...the cows!

After an almost two-year wait, we've begun the process of constructing a fence around eight acres of land that will soon allow us to bring cows to the farm on a permanent basis and begin to round out JPI's farm organism. We've been working on this project for more than two years—and the end is in sight.

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

BD 500—Horn Manure

BD 501—Horn Silica

COMPOST PREPARATIONS

BD 502—Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

BD 503—German Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

BD 504—Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

BD 505—Oak Bark (*Quercus alba*)

BD 506—Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

BD 507—Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

BD 508—Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

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As everyone should be aware, the presence of cows brings life to any farm. And for a biodynamic farm, especially one that makes preparations, the cows bring that special mix of manure and cosmic energy. Growing JPI from an organization that makes and sells preparations to one that fully embodies the life forces that are needed for full expansion of the farm organism is the goal of this important step.

Yet even though I'm excited about the cows, all of us are especially excited to see people back at the farm. We are pleased that we are able to offer in-person workshops and experience the true power of biodynamic agriculture. This fall we are hosting the first JPI Biodynamic Intensive (October

13–15) at the farm as well as a BD 500-making workshop (date TBD) and a Soil Health Workshop (November 4–5). This will also be the first year where JPI's Board is able to physically meet at the farm for our Board retreat. I have never met some of my fellow Board members in person. So I especially look forward to getting back to the farm this fall as we round out another year and, with gratitude, set our sights on 2023. For me biodynamic agriculture has and continues to be about the promise it provides for transforming our broken food and farming systems. I remain hopeful and perpetually optimistic that we will succeed.

Fall Practices for a Biodynamic Garden

Stewart Lundy

In autumn, plants expire their liveliness but leave behind the most variegated physical forms and mineralized colors. Fall colors symbolize the plant's unique relationship to mineral salts. There are clues in this for those willing to look closer.

Though it often feels early, fall is the time to prepare for spring. In a sense, the spiritual year begins in autumn. As Steiner indicates in GA233 (Dornach, 19th April, 1924), Easter originally belonged in the Autumn. "It is anthropology's task to add to the thought of death that of resurrection, to become an inner celebration of the resurrection of the human soul, imbuing our philosophy with an Easter mood." All that dies lives again. For the experienced farmer, autumn is always a promise of spring as much as sundown guarantees a new dawn.

Ehrenfried Pfeiffer liked to remind people that problems in an orchard this year resulted from previous years' conditions. If we want an abundant garden next year, now is the time to prepare. If you can finely chop leaves or debris in the garden, this greatly facilitates the soil's ability to assimilate what you have helped "chew" for it. I like to cultivate beds—even lightly—to half-incorporate the chopped-up old plant material. Spraying out barrel compound (BC) in the autumn is a beautiful practice.

I often like to make sure that any cover crop is properly treated with 500 horn manure. While I almost always spray out 500 horn manure only in the evenings, I also prefer to spray out 500 horn manure just before cultivating the soil; that way, all of it gets mixed into the soil. If your region permits it, any green cover crop that you're able to grow in your beds will help keep the biodynamic impulse active from season to season. In many countries around the world

horn- and hoof-meal are used throughout agriculture. The special kinship between biodynamics and horn material cultivates a specific kind of life impulse. On our farm, we let our animals in during the fall to consume any of the fall plants and manure the soil before turning the remaining debris under. In experiments performed by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, legumes treated with 500 horn manure grew more (and larger) nodules and fixed more nitrogen than untreated cover crops.

If you have surplus plant material in the fall, now is a great time to build a compost pile. If you can rent a wood chipper, shredding all your plant material, you can greatly accelerate the conversion of leftover plant matter into exquisite, finished colloidal humus. There are many ways to do this successfully, but there have been good results at universities with the Johnson-Su bioreactor, which was originally designed to manage surplus dairy cow manure.

In some cases, market gardens cannot produce enough compost for themselves and are forced to purchase compost from off the farm. If you must import compost, *fall is the time to do this*, even if you won't be using it until spring! Make or buy compost in the fall, add your biodynamic compost preparations, and let that compost *age* thoroughly. Though the final volume will have decreased considerably by aging it, the quality of the compost will have improved dramatically. Preparations and calendars can be purchased at www.jpibiodynamics.org.

Best wishes for your gardening efforts!

Aspen Moon Farm: Hope, Passion, and A Bit of Crazy

Erin Dreistadt

Aspen Moon Farm started with a lot of hope, passion, vision, and a little bit of crazy. My husband, Jason, and I wanted to feed our community the same nutritious food we were feeding our family. We started our adventure as gardeners, who turned into homesteaders, who turned into farmers, when we landed in Hygiene, Colorado, kind of by accident. We knew we wanted to grow food, but we didn't yet know we wanted to farm for the community. This awareness grew after we bought a house with 2 acres. The house was rundown and neglected, having been rented to various tenants for a decade. But it was enough to get us started, and it was here we started our farming journey.

The first year we borrowed a tractor from our neighbor and plowed up our front pasture so we could grow food on a half-acre. We took what we grew to the nearby farmers market. In those days, we considered three hundred dollars in sales a good day. We also set up a little roadside self-serve stand.

The following year we leased 5 acres next door. That inspired us to want to do more. Since those early days, we have been growing, building, and expanding till we now have 99 acres in our care. We cultivate about 25 acres annually, which allows for some large rotations. Some acres remain in cover crops for an entire year or two before being rotated back into growing food. We use the remainder of the acreage for everything else: infrastructure (packhouse, farm housing, parking for customers and our fleet of trucks and tractors, the roadside farm stand, etc); roads between fields; buffer zones between neighboring farmed acreage; livestock grazing areas; and some natural strips that also act as insectaries and support active riparian habitat. It may seem surprising but it takes 100 acres of land to grow 25 acres of vegetables.

We consider ourselves stewards rather than owners of this land—we see our job as supporting and caring for it rather than claiming it as something we own. Most of the time, it



An aspen in autumn stands among the brassicas, showing off the skyline on Aspen Moon Farm. All images courtesy of Aspen Moon.

sure feels like the land works us, rather than we work the land. Nevertheless, our first and foremost job as farmers is to build good, active soil, vibrant with microbial life. Our side job is growing crops. This is our mission, because, without healthy soil, there are no healthy crops. Healthy soil is at the heart of the biodynamic approach to farming.

Jason and I started practicing biodynamics in our backyard garden when we learned about it from our children's Waldorf kindergarten classes. We immediately loved its connection with Nature. It felt right. I remember feeling like a kindergartener myself while learning the complexity and layers of biodynamic processes, and reading the teachings of Steiner. It soon became clear that biodynamics is a journey. I don't know that we will ever feel like experts, but we do what we can. We see with our own eyes the results of the biodynamic preparations and following the calendar for planting.

We are committed to the biodynamic approach, so much so that we were once a Demeter certified biodynamic farm.

However, when the Demeter USA organization made some changes, the logistics got too difficult and expensive for us to sustain. So we let that certification go, though, hopefully, releasing it is only temporary. We are still USDA certified organic (for all and everything we do) and we always will be. Our customers need to see and know this. Most people don't have time to research the complexity of whether their food is grown naturally and sustainably or not, but most know what it means when you say you are certified organic. At Aspen Moon, we strive to cast a wide net, to feed as many people as possible with highly nutritious, vibrant, flavorful food. We feel this is how we help make the world a better place.

We use the BD sprays when we can—500, 501, and barrel compost. We also fertilize with barrel compost, nettle tea, and comfrey tea that we ferment in barrels in the greenhouse. We build our own compost and prep it with all 6 compost preps. We also make our own barrel compost and horn manure.

Yes, we have cows! They are essential to the BD Farm. We



Cows at home on the farm are worth their weight in gold for the high quality manure they produce.

could never replicate what they do any other way without their presence. Even the shape of their hooves aerates the soil just right when they move about the fields. People always ask us what our cows are for, implying they provide milk or beef. We tactfully explain that they bring fertility to the farm, which generates a wide variety of responses.

We move the cows into our crop fields in late fall and pasture them on the cover crops too. These are wild cows, meaning that we provide them with food and water, and then just let them be. Our staff love to feed them the big zucchini and leftover pumpkins. Every once in a while, they'll get to touch one of them.

We collect their manure in the winter and add it to our compost heap, feeling good when the compost heap is literally smoking with heat so that you can see vapor on the cold days. It's the cow manure that heats it up better than anything else.

When we bury horns or make the barrel compost, we plan this for a day when most of the staff can attend. I love the idea of gathering a larger community together for BD work, but we have to keep the work of the farm going all the time. We have found we are unable to commit to a regular schedule with the expectation of a set time. We have tried, but then the whole day becomes a struggle to make that scheduled time fit within the other farm processes. At times, small BD groups or workshops have been held in the surrounding community led by people who are not currently running a working farm. Sometimes we are able to join or to send some staff as the day allows, which has felt really supportive of the Farm organism.

Growing flowers interspersed throughout all of our vegetable fields is another biodynamic approach we follow, but it surely doesn't make harvesting easy. We have to drive all around the farm to harvest the flowers for bouquets instead of having them all in one field. Nevertheless, the flowers bring beneficial insects to every field, as well as beauty to all of our human farmers throughout the long work days.

Mother Nature is so cool! Good soil grows beautiful blooms, and beautiful blooms bring pollinators to help grow good crops. So we mix our flowers to form incredible bouquets. One of the joys that comes with offering the community such lovely flowers is that we are a source of fresh bouquets for brides who want special arrangements with which to celebrate their weddings. We love to tell people they can feel good about purchasing organic flowers, especially since the mainstream flower industry relies on intensive chemical and preservative usage to grow the blossoms it sells. Please don't put your face in mainstream flowers, but do put your face in ours... and breathe deeply!

Thanks to our great customers here in the Boulder County



Autumn's colorful harvest of hot peppers prepared for farmers' market customers.

area, we have nurtured our community with the good food from our farm for 14 years. We even have a few of our CSA (community supported agriculture) members who have been with us for the entire 13 years we have offered this service.

Rather than participate in the CSA, some customers prefer to visit our roadside farm stand. It is outdoors, quaint, and rarely crowded. On the other hand, the farmers' markets are always well-attended, and we love being present there because of the excitement the markets generate. Our staff enjoys connecting to the people who love the food they work so hard all week to grow and harvest. Everyone of them also likes to put on a clean shirt for the day.

We also build community among our staff, which comprises as many as 25 people during peak season each year, with fewer staff in early Spring and late Fall. Every year, some staff return and some are first timers. Many long lasting friendships have been built here at Aspen Moon. When I interview applicants, I always say that the best thing Aspen Moon has to offer is the people we get to work with. We have three to five interns each year. They agree to help us run the farm by living on the farm and rotating some of the weekend livestock chores. It is a regular job, and we pay them regular wages, but we also commit to providing them with the greatest diversity of farm work so that they get to see every aspect of running a farm. In the Spring we have a season of greenhouse work that they participate in. We seed, grow, and pot-up starter plants to sell to gardeners, as well as start and grow all starter plants for our own farm. Organic starter plants are hard to find, so we help community members grow their own organic and



Harvesting lettuce grown in the field

biodynamic food. We put some of our own biodynamic compost in every plant we sell.

Interns also learn about all the crops, livestock care, field management, pest management, packhorse work, farmers markets, CSA, roadside farm stand, irrigation, BD work, flowers, and more. We have had several interns stay on as crew leaders the second year. A few interns go on to start their own farms. I like to promote the various ways that farming can become a career. Farms need managers desperately, which can be an equally appealing goal especially when considering how hard it is to make the business side of farming work well with a start-up. We ran a landscaping business simultaneously with the farm for six years to make it all work out.

We connect with our farm community at our farm stand, at markets, and at CSA pick-up points. We also use email to reach our customers with information about what's in season, news about the CSA, and other topics of interest. Outside of that, we don't have time for outside events in the community. We are a production farm, and our mission is to feed the greatest number of people we can with the highest quality, most nutritious, flavorful organic and biodynamic food we have the ability to grow.

I enjoy learning about farms that offer educational events, but we focus on production because that is what we do well. We are all doing the parts of farming that we are called to do—and certainly it isn't realistic for one farm to be able to do it all. Farming is so incredibly labor intensive,

there never seems to be enough time in a day to check everything we would like to accomplish off the list.

Everything keeps changing. I think I say this every year, but it still feels true and real to say it. When the pandemic hit, our CSA grew from 250 to 1,000 members. The farmers' markets closed down for a while, so we felt called to step up and find a way to meet our community's need for fresh food. We switched to a complex CSA software program that allows members to customize their veggie share each week from their device at home. Now in 2022 we still have 700 CSA members.

We have returned to farmers' markets again as well, but we find ourselves still negotiating the amount of food we need for each outlet. These adjustments have not been easy, because they have changed the way we work on the farm as a whole. Weather shifts also continue to impact us. We just had hail damage three days ago. For the first eight years we farmed we experienced no hail. Now hail damage occurs annually, and it is still a horrible shock every time. So much work and care has gone into the crops that, when the hail storms arrive, it is truly heartbreaking.

Luckily, we have the daily demands of the farm to keep up with. These literally give us no time to lament. We simply have to keep working. We find it therapeutic to be pulled along by a force greater than ourselves, especially when it is one we believe in so passionately.



Plants started in a high tunnel in preparation for warm weather and transition to the soil under the sun.

In addition to dramatic hail events, long spells of extreme heat have also increased. Managing and employing people has changed drastically over the 14 years we have been farming also. We try to adapt and roll with whatever comes up in the lives of those who work with and for us, but it is still challenging. For most people, a job is no longer the central experience, but rather the side-gig to a full and demanding life. However, for us the farm is no side-gig, ever. We struggle to keep up with its needs, something that is especially difficult now since we are understaffed like most places.

I love this farm. I love what I do. I love feeding people, and I am so very grateful for the customers who love and support Aspen Moon. We do continue to struggle every year, and I often wonder if we will make it through the season because the workload is so huge. Honestly, I can say it has not gotten any easier during our 14 years of farming. Our well broke this year. It just stopped working one day and cannot be fixed. That well supplied water to two fields and three hoop houses. Jason rigged up a system with the city's water because we already had crops in those fields and hoop houses. We just got the bill for June—\$4,300. This is only one tiny detail of the hurdles we face on a daily basis. I share this because it is true, and because what we do is far from the romantic life some of the general public assume we live.

"I would love to quit my corporate job and do what you do!"

I have heard this many times from customers who do not understand all the ins and outs of farming.

Farms need a lot of support, both the old ones and the new ones. Farming is the hardest thing I've ever done, and I love it from the core of my being, but I don't love it every day. I don't love it most days. But there are *those* days—and I only need a few during the year—when I've done everything I needed to do and, and, remarkably, I'm not overwhelmed. It's then that I feel an incredible connection to Nature, to the Earth, to the people we are feeding—and this makes it all worth it. It isn't glamorous, but it is worthy.

With their three kids in tow, Erin Dreistadt and Jason Griffith started Aspen Moon in 2009. The Aspen Moon family has grown to a team of 20+ dedicated humans whose hope, passion, and vision make the farm awesome.



Fall pumpkin stack at the Aspen Moon Farm farmstand, with a black Halloween cat overseeing the display.

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Growing the Sense-Organ of the Farm: Thoughts from *The Philosophy of Freedom*

Stewart Lundy

Like a human being, in its childhood, a farm is almost entirely a sense-organ.¹ When it is young, a farm takes more than it gives. A preexisting rhythm becomes enclosed within a skin, and the farm organism develops its own pulse, not unlike the way an embryo develops itself as a sheath of pulsing, growing, expanding information. So the farm begins to distinguish what is internal and what is external.

In its early days, much of the thought conducted on a farm is preoccupied with setting up infrastructure as the farm grows its form. Eventually, this thinking-the-farm-into-being focuses more on the *organs* within and their development. The farmer learns how to tend the animals, maintain pasture, cultivate garden fertility, and improve it. With practical experience, the farmer grows more *wisened* and develops a routine that maintains the day-to-day work. As extraordinary grower Alan Chadwick liked to say, “If you obey the technique to perfection, that technique will become invisible.”² An accomplished farmer may no longer think about the technique, having mastered it, but thinking does not cease. In its maturity, the farm’s thought is freed to follow topics beyond maintenance and growth, extending even to efforts that actually nurture

the reproduction of other farms by hosting apprentices. If the farmer is like the director of the farm, then apprentices are like embryonic farmers in utero, growing more through each season. In each stage of a farm’s development, thought serves a different role, but its essential character remains the same: thought reconciles what has been separated back into the rest of the world. In this sense, thought is fundamentally ecological.

In *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Rudolf Steiner posited not final objectivity but rather this form of thinking as an ongoing process that can reconcile the subject alienated from objects by weaving them both back together into a new whole. How a farm relates to its environment changes as the farm matures, and therefore the thoughts involved in reconciling the farm to the evolving environment also change. Because nothing is ever totally separate, thinking on a farm aims at transcending the subject-object division and reintegrating farm and cosmos.

Steiner indicates in *Philosophy of Freedom* that “Just as a colorblind person sees only shades of brilliance without hue, so a person without intuition observes only unconnected perceptual fragments.”³ This extends to the individuality of the farm: if the farm lacks certain “organs,” it cannot perceive or engage some things at all.

When a farmer starts a farm, he or she may only have a vague concept of what a farm should be. But the farmer comes to this with his or her own particular, unique feeling-life. Ask an artist to paint a picture of a chair. It will look different in each case. But every artist can (usually) agree on what a chair is. The spiritual concept of the farm must pass through the imagination of each individual in order to become a reality. “A *mental picture*, then is an individualized concept.”⁴ In Rene Magritte’s famous painting of a pipe which says, “This is not a pipe,” he was not kidding: a picture of a pipe isn’t a pipe—you can’t smoke with it!

The concept of a pipe is the *idea* that might take any number of unusual, particular forms ranging from the bulbous one Sherlock Holmes used to the thin church-warden one that the wizard, Gandalf, preferred. We may draw any number of three-sided shapes, but no matter who draws it and no matter what differences may arise—assuming the lines are straight—each three-sided shape is nonetheless a triangle. Likewise, the concept of a farm is *universal* the way that the concept of a triangle is universal, but how farm and triangle *look* is individualized when a particular farmer calls on his or her unique imagination.

The farm as an *organism* is a universal idea. The farm as

This and other articles are intended to explore some of the epistemological side of spiritual science, which provides the foundation for something like the creation of the biodynamic preparations. While not downplaying the practical value of the preparations, I feel it is of more significance for farmers to transform themselves and the way they look at the world. If we are seeking a renewal of the spiritual foundations of agriculture, then we must look beyond the small sphere of what is strictly considered biodynamic.

Biodynamics is, of course, applied spiritual science. How do we look for new ways to apply spiritual science in an individual’s life? In a farmer’s life? I’m hoping this and future articles help show how to cultivate a mindset receptive to new inspirations for practical applications on the farm. These are universal themes tailored to a specific field. If all we do in biodynamics is repeat etheric and astral, and use some magic potions, we’re little different than other modes of agriculture in terms of mindset. How does the farmer cultivate not just crops, but himself? This is what I hope this series will assist with.

The farm as an organism is a universal idea. But the farm as a concrete individuality is what that universal idea looks like when imagined by a particular person. And that is why there is no cut-and-paste model exists in biodynamics. We cannot simply lift a model from one place and replicate it identically anywhere.

a concrete *individuality* is what that universal idea looks like when imagined by a particular person. *And that is why no cut-and-paste model exists in biodynamics.* We cannot lift a model from one place and replicate it identically anywhere. Even if we could, this would be a failure to use our own imaginations and a failure to particularize the universal concept of *farm* to its specific ecosystem. The universal *principles* from another operation may be borrowed, they then must be *particularized* to work with the farmer's unique situation. The farmer already engages many of these themes, but making these themes *conscious* was a significant part of Steiner's project.

“Thinking is the element through which we participate in the universal process of the cosmos; feeling is the element through which we can withdraw into the confines of our own being.”⁵ In a temperate ecosystem, we can see this wherever the area becomes less differentiated, when expressive conditions become subdued. We can recognize the time when an ecosystem or a farm “participate[s] in the universal process of the cosmos” most pronouncedly in winter. Conversely, when each ecosystem or farm is most *itself* and can “withdraw into the confines of [its] own being” is during summer, when plants are at their fullest differentiation. Spring is less differentiated than summer as many young tender plants are so similar at their earliest stages. In autumn, the summer vitality withdraws, leaving behind the unique signature of the distinct mineral salts in the changing autumn colors.

If the farmer practices seeing winter as the time of thought for the farm and summer as the time of individualized feeling, much can be gained. As Steiner says in the *Agriculture Course*, there is a great deal of difference between a meditation in winter and a meditation in summer.⁶ Simply asking yourself, “what is a farm?” and then proceeding to try to visualize it—or better, *draw* it—will help you feel out how the abstract idea can be given *life* with your own personal mode of feeling.

In *Sensitive Chaos*, Theodore Schwenk notes the following: “The activity of thinking is essentially an expression of flowing movement. Only when thinking dwells on a particular content, a particular form, does it order itself accordingly and create an idea. Every idea—like every organic form—arises in a process of flow, until the movement congeals into a form. Therefore we speak of a capacity to think fluently when someone is skillfully able to carry out this creation of form in thought, harmoniously coordinating the stream of thoughts and progressing from one idea to another without digression—without creating ‘whirlpools.’ We say of someone who is less successful in this that his thinking is languid and sluggish. An exercise suggested by Rudolf Steiner to help thinking to become fluent and mobile is to recreate and transform in thought, for instance, cloud formations. With this ability to enter thoughtfully into everything and to picture all things into the form of ideas, the process of thinking partakes in the laws of formative processes of the universe. These are the same laws as those at work in the fluid element that renounces a form of



“If the farmer practices seeing winter as the time of thought for the farm and summer as the time of individualized feeling, much can be gained.”



The concept of “triangle” is interpreted differently by each person. Drawing by Stewart Lundy.

its own and is prepared to enter into all things, to unite all things, to absorb all things.”⁷

“We shall call the form in which thought-content first arises *intuition*.”⁸ This moment of discovery of a concept is that *Eureka!* moment, which to me, is intuition—the discovery of a new concept that reunifies the broken world—as it is *felt*. When we think in the essential sense of the word (not parroting popular thoughts or regurgitating things we’ve memorized) we know when we know.

Cognition is like what happens when we look at an optical illusion long enough: initially we perceive nothing but chaos, and then have that *a-ha!* moment of recognition. Cognition organizes the chaos of the perceptual world, fitting all that it can into conceptual forms. But if we lack a specific concept (or perhaps lack the intuitive faculty to find new concepts) our cognition will not be able to recognize the thing we’re seeing in much the same way that if we have bad eyes (or no eyes at all) we will not be able to see the same objects clearly.

This is a place of paramount importance. The farmer who lacks specific concepts will be blind to what those concepts could disclose. Even though the task may seem intimidating (because initially we are all half-blind), it is important to know that we *all* have intuition or we wouldn’t recognize ice, steam, rain, snow, and fog as all belonging, conceptually, to the same thing—water. You can only develop what you already have,

and you are already intuitive. Give your intuition a robust repertoire of dynamic concepts, each of which (even if learned from someone else) must be *born* in you as a lived experience. This requires effort. Thinking is something that, in fact, only happens with concerted effort. But the *thinking* farmer will reach greater spiritual heights than any unthinking farmer.

The first thing that we become aware of is our senses. Then what meets us is how those senses make us feel. Only finally does thought arise after the fact. But of these, it is only *thought* that reunifies us with our environment in a holistic way. Before we’ve discovered certain thoughts, farming may seem strange to us. A new intern may not be able to differentiate weeds from cultivated crops that yield good food. One of our own interns, seeing how we gathered dark compost from a pile and spread it into the soil asked, “Why are you adding dirt to the dirt?” Without the vital concept of *compost*, a dark earthy pile is just another pile of dirt. Our intern perceived the same outer phenomena we did, but did not experience the same thing because certain concepts were lacking.

The same is true when we enter the spiritual world of concepts—someone lacking concepts in that field will be unable to distinguish one thing from another. But colorblindness in no way disproves the existence of color. Fortunately, almost all of us have the capacity to develop the concept of

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So the ideal of a barn—or by extension, a farm individuality—is made real for each person by the interplay of thinking, willing, and feeling forces. Drawing by Stewart Lundy.

compost and virtually anyone reading this *already* knows the difference between dirt and compost. Many of our experienced readers will likely want to refer not to dirt but to living *soil*.

To engage our intuition on the farm, it is helpful to set aside dedicated time specifically for impartial observation. A clear vision of a plant will evoke a clearer mood within the soul. Likewise, a clear feeling in the soul gives a fuller image of what may then be understood as a concept that bridges the divide between subject and object and thus repairs the world. What happens next? It happens once more. Without ever shedding our individuality, this is an ever-expanding circle or spiral, if you will, of an ever-greater appreciation and participation with the cosmic Whole.

“No other activity of the human soul is as easily misunderstood as thinking. Feeling and willing warm the human soul even when we look back and recollect their original state, while thinking all too easily leaves us cold.”⁹

If we allow ourselves to drift off into icy abstraction, without permeating our thoughts with warm feeling, our thought world becomes desolate and is easily estranged from reality. Our active feeling life anchors universal thoughts to participation in reality. Participation is always particular, never abstract. Steiner reminds us that, “A true

individual will be the person who reaches the highest, with his or her feelings, into the world of ideals.”¹⁰ Likewise, a true farm *individuality* is not just a farm as an abstract concept, nor native ecosystem but a soulful interplay between those polarities.

Notes

- 1) “the child is entirely sense-organ (i.e. a child up to the seventh year).”—Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Ground for Education*, GA 305 (16 August 1922, Oxford).
- 2) alan-chadwick.org/html%20pages/quotes.html.
- 3) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 89.
- 4) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 100.
- 5) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 101.
- 6) “One must realise that it makes all the difference whether an exercise of concentration is carried out in mid-winter or in midsummer.” GA327 (12 June 1924, Koberwitz).
- 7) Theodore Schwenk, *Sensitive Chaos*, pg. 96.
- 8) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 88.
- 9) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 133.
- 10) Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, 102.

Historic Zinniker Farm Seeks New Lead Farmer

Zinniker Farm is the oldest, continually operated biodynamic farm in the United States and has played a huge role in the development of both the organic and biodynamic farming movements. The farm has 164 certified organic acres, thriving beef and poultry enterprises, and incredibly vital soil. At present we are seeking a farmer/farm family to help Mark and Petra Zinniker steward the farm into the future. On-farm housing is available, and a strong consumer group (The Zinniker Farm Stewardship Association) has formed and is in the process of developing an innovative CSA type model for the future of the farm. Go to zinnikerfarm.com/farmer-search for more information or to apply.

Fall Equinox Milk and Honey Festival

September 29 (Michaelmas) to October 1

Join us at the Honeybee Sanctuary during the Fall Equinox, as we come together in joy, learning, and celebration, turning our attention to humanity's sacred connection to the cosmos. Our themes this year are inspired by the incredible transformation of sunlight by the plant world to create a landscape flowing with milk and honey. We will draw from our rich community of Lead Learners, engaging in dance, movement, and the ritual of biodynamic preparation making, as well as sharing our experiences with cows, goats, plants, and bees.

During this festival, we are offering special opportunities for families and people of all ages. Parallel nature-based programming for children will be offered alongside or along with adult activities. Our fabulous staff will cater the event, providing delicious meals and snacks from our biodynamic gardens.

For information or to register, go to spikenardfarm.org.



Photo courtesy of Alex Tuchman at Spikenard Farm

Ongoing Activities

Biodynamic Association Courses and Webinar Series

For a small fee, the Biodynamic Association offers ongoing webinars on pertinent topics. <https://www.biodynamics.com/webinars>

Chesapeake Biodynamic Network (CBDN), College Park, MD

Meetings, networking, Agriculture Course study and biodynamic workshops held monthly in College Park, MD. Contact Michael Judge for the schedule at mjudge2000@gmail.com.

The Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge, New York

Workshops and trainings. www.pfeiffercenter.org

Spikenard Farm Honeybee Sanctuary, Floyd, VA

Classes in sustainable beekeeping and biodynamics. Apprenticeship/internship opportunities. www.spikenardfarm.org

Beautiful Demeter Certified, biodynamic land in Lee County, TX; 56.764 acres, located one hour east of Austin. Sandy loam soil, barbed wire fencing, two ponds and four farm structures. Currently operated as Chickamaw Farm~Ranch & Wildlife. Presently Irish Dexter cattle operation selling premium beef at two prime locations at Austin's two premier farmers' markets. The land has great agricultural potential. Photos and additional information available. Bill McCranie, tel. 512.567.3456, chickamaw@gmail.com.

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“...we must observe these more intimate relationships of Nature when we are dealing with the life, together on the farm, of plant and animal...we must not only consider those animals which are undoubtedly very near to us....We must also observe with intelligence, let us say, the many colored world of insects..the plant-world...the birds.””

Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture Course*, (Adams trans.), pg. 125



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