



Applied BIODYNAMICS

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Pilgrimage to Finca Sagrada
Love Is In The Earth
Freedom, Love, and Goodness

From the Editor

The best thing about my childhood was growing up on land that had been farmed by my grandparents and that, by the time I explored it, was abundant with food and flowers. Here, I chased chickens, picked wildflowers, and told myself stories under the shade of mature pecan trees. When my family drove to town, we passed other farms run by people we knew. To my young mind there was a profound order to everything around me, and that order originated with the ground under me.

Much later, as a young freelance editor, I worked on a manuscript intended as a full color celebration of commercial farming. Early in the manuscript, the author praised big farms run by massive machinery. “The family farm is dead,” the author wrote, immortalizing the efficiencies of the new machine culture.

I read that sentence over and over. I couldn’t, really didn’t, believe it. I knew I could drive a distance down the road and find those farms the author said didn’t exist and speak with the farmers. But, of course, and sadly, the book only reflected the first early waves of commercial farming that since has led to the long struggle that Earth-loving farmers have waged to maintain living soil.

Living soil is the focus of this issue, not just in the

United States, but in Ecuador where I had the pleasure to travel last year. Walter Moora, no stranger to biodynamic agriculture, now lives and farms there, where he intends to take farming to a new level—the building (or perhaps rebuilding) of communities invested in the well being of the land. Finca Sagrada (Sacred Farm) lives up to its name, with a Spirit House he was instructed to build by the Kogi tribe to anchor the land.

Suelo Vivo, the Living Ground project also in Villcabamba, Ecuador, is focusing on regeneration of soil microbes through compost, using skills acquired from study with Dr. Elaine Ingham. Learn more about these grassroots efforts in this issue.

Finally, Max Leyf, in part one of his article that further examines Steiner’s Philosophy of Freedom, reminds us that “Biodynamics emerges as a spiritual way of knowing applied to the specialized field of agriculture. It is not a doctrine but rather a way of seeing and a way of living.”

Though some may regard small family farms as a nostalgic glance toward the past, others on the front lines of regenerative biodynamic farming recognize that these are the forces of love that have and, I hope, will continue to sustain the bounty of the Earth.

Mary Maruca

Applied Biodynamics

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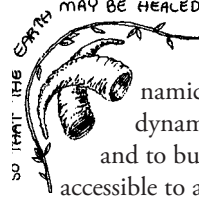
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Front cover: The House of Original Thought, as the Kogi named it, anchors Walter Moora’s farm in Ecuador and adds a layer of spiritual significance to his work there. Image courtesy of finca-sagrada.com.

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 Spring Update

Ben Nommay

Coming to a new piece of land in the middle of winter has its pros and cons. Not much to do outside gives me time to walk the land, watching the way the wind blows in, seeing the path of the sun, and noticing what the shade covers first. I am eager to get to know the local plants and to discover what has been planted around the property. The leftover stalks from last year's growth hint at some of my plant allies around.

Starting in late February, we watched the exhaling of the Earth as small bits of new green life slowly poked up from the ground. We enlarged our area where we grow the preparation herbs by dividing valerian plants, moving yarrow out of the cow pasture to a new home safe from the cows, and established new nettle patches by transplanting rhizomes along the riverbank.

We also created two new Barrel Compound pits, one buried completely below the earth and one buried half way. The pits are constructed next to each other, so that we can determine if one matures differently than the other.

I am very excited also to announce that we have found a herd of cattle to bring home to JPI. An elder who has lost the lease for her cattle will be transitioning her herd to

JPI to bring the anticipated collective cow energy here. This addition of life breathing into the land also helps fulfill the farm organism at JPI. We will be able to collect manure that is digested from our biodynamic pastures, as well as harvest the organs from our own cattle to use to create preparations.

We intend to create a silvopasture for the cattle to graze in. This will diversify the forage for the cattle, provide habitat for other wildlife, and produce food for the humans! I have started chestnuts, pawpaws, and persimmons from seeds.

For anyone who would like to help us further diversity the plant life on the farm, we are looking and happy to accept healthy cuttings, bulbs, seedlings, and viable open pollinated seeds from organic/biodynamic growers. Please note that we are unable to accept hybrid, GMO, or treated seeds, plants categorized as invasive species, and plants toxic to pets and livestock. Please contact us at the farm's office to make arrangements (540-745-7030).

Ben Nommay is JPI's new farm manager and preparation maker, previously with Against the Grain Farm in North Carolina where he worked with livestock, grew medicinal herbs, and made all the biodynamic preparations onsite.



Pilgrimage to Finca Sagrada

Mary Maruca

In the mountainous terrain around Vilcabamba, Ecuador, one day is much the same as the next—and all of them are good.

At least they felt that way to me, a refugee from the built environment of the Atlantic Seaboard, when I visited in October 2022. Since I had relinquished the practice of travel for some time, this was my first trip outside the United States in many years. I did not know what to expect as the plane left the runway and the crowded neighborhoods of Washington, D.C., fell away, ultimately to be replaced with glimpses of mountainous green rainforests beyond my window. Situated within the safety of a bowl of southern Andean mountains, my destination offered enough green vistas to soothe even my city-singed eyes and create an environment of rest.

The town of Vilcabamba, a valley town at the base of these protective mountains, offered ease and relaxation, good food and peace, for many generations before I arrived. Featured in the American press on the cover of *National Geographic* in 1973, the town is noted for the longevity of its

residents. Billboards feature the welcoming faces of smiling old men. Thanks to then author Dr. Alexander Leaf of Harvard Medical School, the town and valley became known as the Valley of Longevity. Indeed, one of the residents farming in the nearby mountains sited her home in an area named the Mountains of the Good Death, suggesting that how one ages in Vilcabamba is part of the gift of this region.

Vilcabamba also has a significant expat population, large enough to be referred to on the town's website. Many of these residents come from the colder regions of the Americas, eager to enjoy the equator's year-round mild climate and food security. One such farmer is Walter Moora, no stranger to biodynamic communities, among them the Camphill communities, a farmer who helped launch Seven Stars yogurt, was part of Demeter's certification board, and successfully farmed many years in Wisconsin where he had a production-focused dairy farm.

Born in Borneo of Dutch parents, Walter, now 72, explained that he lived in those jungles as a boy until the Dutch felt themselves unwelcome there. This change offered his family little choice but to move on. Moora spent his youth in Malaysia and England, having been sent at age seven to a British boarding school when life for his Dutch family became challenging.

His boarding school experience ended two years later, however, when his parents visited, expecting to be warmly welcomed by their children. Instead, the young Walter and his siblings demonstrated well-polished British manners. Walter extended his hand for his parents to politely shake. No hug. No kiss. No other welcome. Thus ended Walter's British education, and so back he and his siblings went to live with his family on the land, just in time for another move, this one to New Zealand.

To speak with Walter is to have a strong sense of his many years as a citizen of Earth, and especially his appreciation for the soil on whatever part of the planet he has walked. He tells the story of his teen years when he didn't particularly like people and found farm work offered respite from human chatter. At age 18, he had a serious accident with a chainsaw, fell on a chainsaw in fact, and so had months of difficult, lonely recovery. During that time, he considered his life and future.

At one point following his recovery, Walter found himself walking beside the farmer with whom he first apprenticed. The older man glanced skyward, admiring the flight of a circling hawk.

"I thought," Walter said, "if someone who had farmed



Walter Moora farms differently than he did in the U.S., allowing his grains and vegetables to coexist in colorful relationship...no more orderly production rows.

as long as he had could still appreciate the flight of a hawk, there must be something in this farming thing for me too.”

He imagined the farmer as a kind of modern day Parsifal, the Grail knight who spent a lifetime trying to understand the riddle of the Fisher King, and thus break the spell and heal the land. In that moment, walking with his mentor, Walter became aware of the power of farming—that a man could appreciate the cycles of nature even after years of struggling with them. So Moora began to explore more seriously what farming might offer to him. He arrived in the States in 1972, a quiet man who found the soil easier to work with than the people who occupied it.

Though Walter ultimately spent his adult farming years in Wisconsin and even has a daughter and her family who still live there, moving so often as a young man likely gave him an innate understanding that he could be at home wherever he found himself. He explored biodynamic agriculture after leaving New Zealand, having come to recognize the damage done by traditional commercial farming. His marriage to Susan Davis in 2001 added to his understanding of the power that financial networks had to improve lands and people. Susan founded KINS Innovation Networks, which uses Nature as a model for innovation.

Moving to Ecuador may not have been the culmination of a specific conscious intention, but he and Susan still followed the bread crumbs so to speak, guidance in the form of synchronicities that had shown up from time to time for them both. In this instance, a client of Susan’s in Washington, D.C., invited them to stay at her guest house on the property she had just purchased in Vilcabamba. The comfortable warmth and relaxation offered by such an invitation was not something a Wisconsin farmer could say no to. So the couple left North America for a vacation that morphed into a different way of life.

Even for someone new to Ecuador, it doesn’t take long to appreciate the natural environment surrounding Vilcabamba or to imagine oneself collecting wild bananas, papayas, mangoes, and citrus, free for the picking. Like others before them, Susan and Walter felt the draw of this life and bought a half finished house they thought they would use in retirement. But retirement came sooner than expected when they calculated they could be saving money in Vilcabamba and living more comfortably there than in Wisconsin. So Walter sold his cows, and the couple returned to Vilcabamba for a 3-month sabbatical that has endured for 15 years.

Vilcabamba seems to be one of the places where people who have experienced stress of one kind or another come to start new lives. Walter and Susan could see things changing in the United States. They arrived in Ecuador in 2007, during the subprime mortgage crisis here in America,



Walter with wife Susan in their flower garden

which extended into 2008 and beyond. Other expats now living in Vilcabamba timed their move just before or just after the Covid lockdowns.

Once enjoying in-town life, Walter and Susan didn’t expect to farm again in their adopted country. One day, however, a neighbor pointed out some farm land that looked too good to resist. Walter had just completed a two-year sacred geometry course with Marco Pogacnik, a Slovakian artist and author who uses his stone statues as acupuncture for the Earth to help restore elemental energies. The course deepened Walter’s own intuition.

Both his intuition and his long years of farming told him the land being sold had a special resonance. The 24 acres the couple bought and named Finca Sagrada—Sacred Farm—ultimately has become known as “the place where the stars were seeded on Earth,” indicating its sacred significance. At Finca Sagrada, Walter and Susan intended something different than the biodynamic production farm they had owned in the past. Rather, they began to consider a farm that focused on community development within a biodynamic setting. Susan’s long-time work with financial networks to build strong local economies had infused Walter’s desire to expand biodynamic principles into community life.

Finca Sagrada is 100 percent biodynamic and organic. Walter uses the preparations provided by JPI, and sprays them across the land multiple times a year. On the farm he is joined by four to six volunteers who arrive from around the world for a month of work and service on the land. He also has two primary partners/employees, Jose Calva and his wife, Carmen Chamba Solano. They work a rhythm of ten days on the farm and then return home for four days before coming back. Their traditional farming style has replaced the ordered farm rows Walter practiced in the past. In the beginning he was unsure about the cacophony of color and interweaving of plantings that his two partners favored but found that these new practices increased the presence of pollinators and infused the soil with healthy microbes.

Now he is completely convinced of the importance of community input, so convinced that his second home in Ecuador—his farm home—now is a gathering place both for those working on the farm and those traveling from beyond its borders. This openness has led Walter to consider future educational farm workshops and retreats, as well as to change the legal status of the land to an LLC, or an SAS as it is known in Ecuador. He and Susan are transitioning from a private ownership model to community governance



Walter leads farm tours, here showing the size of his quinoa plants

ownership. So when land came up adjacent to their property, they added the almost ten acres—four hectares—of additional land with the hope that this will encourage creation of a small community (for more information, go to finca-sagrada.com/community-opportunities/).

“We’re looking for three to five shareholders to have leases to build their own houses and steward the sacred site.”

Already at the farm there are shared community meals three times a day announced by the blowing of a conch shell—a call to shared food and conversation. A list of tasks is posted outside the entrance to the house on a large chalk board, listing the volunteers responsible for completing them.

“Some of us feel there may be hard times in the next few years,” he explains. “We’re hoping to bring people closer together to help each other.”

Acting on his belief in community leadership, he and others in Vilcabamba are discussing the creation of new currency for the valley. Ecuador’s laws of governance allow for this. Ecuador has had a cash economy based on the dollar since 2000 and is now in the throes of converting to a digital currency, though citizens in this little community are taking leadership roles to plan for something more tangible.

To reach Finca Sagrada is no easy task by American standards. Transportation depends on local cab drivers, whose vehicles are really comfortable trucks with good suspension. Used to the vagaries of Ecuadorian roads, the drivers know where broken tarmac requires slower speeds, as well as where highway gives way to compressed dirt and then from dirt back to highway again. Indeed, many in town do not own cars, preferring cabs or walking to bus stops to get to larger towns.

On this particularly perfect blue-sky day, we took a cab the 45-minute drive up and down narrow winding roads to the farm. At one white-knuckle moment, a truck driving to town came down the same one-lane dirt road our driver was climbing up. The rules of the road require the driver going down hill to back up till the one coming up can maneuver around. Our gifted driver made the negotiation for vertical space seem easy and natural, while I sat in the back seat, pondering all the times I had been unable to effortlessly shift gears even on a level road. And so we continued on, clinging, in a sense, to the side of a mountain, following the only road into the sacred valley where Moora and only a few other families owned land. Far below us a vibrant river curved and stretched. Like the river, the road brought us to the gate of Walter Moora’s farm.

Invited to the farm’s community lunch, we arrived just in time, as the long farm table was being set on the back porch and the great conch shell was being blown to gather everyone together. Though it was early November on the



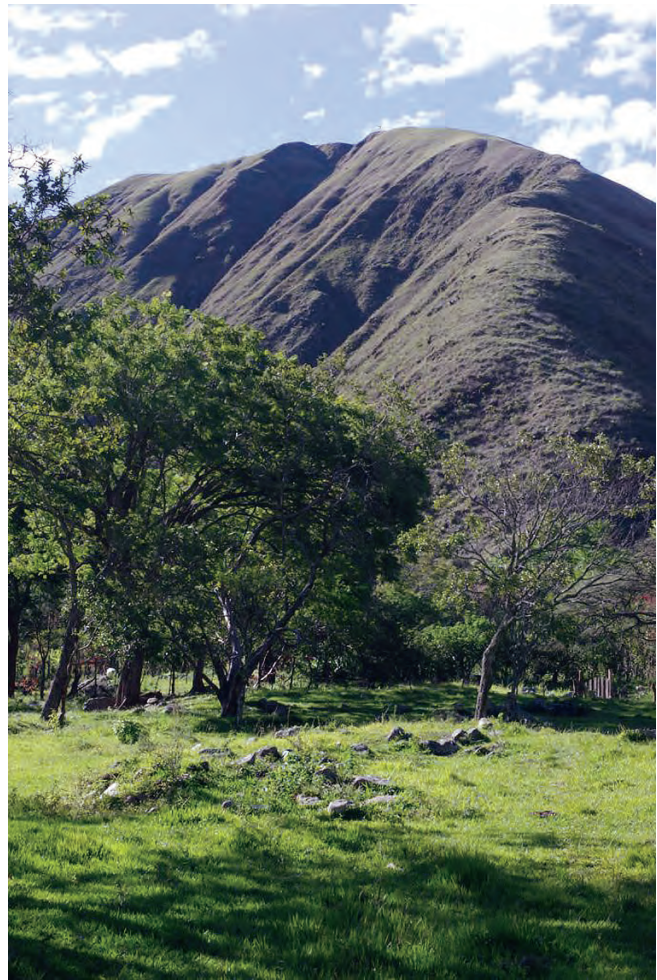
Walter's land is bordered by a strong river, reducing concern about fires

East Coast in America, it was always summer here, and the kind of pleasant, dappled sunlit summer day that makes you want to spend every hour outside walking in the grass with your shoes off. My traveling companions and I had been promised a tour of the farm following lunch, so we all counted ourselves lucky to spend a pleasant afternoon this way.

No end of delicious vegetable dishes—salads, casseroles, soups, fruits—and a meat or two sat on the long kitchen counter, waiting for everyone to serve themselves. At the table, Walter told stories, among them how the farm began. He also offered some biodynamic wisdom to those others around the table who worked the farm with him. One of the topics later in the afternoon was a discussion of elemental influences as described by Steiner.

"I love the land," Walter said "and still enjoy working, but I've had to change to less strenuous work as I've gotten older. Now I particularly enjoy sharing biodynamics with the volunteers who come to the farm."

Walter offered a living example of this as he and Susan showed us the farm, taking us through the gardens, past the rushing river that borders their property and helps protect them from wildfires, to the Spirit House, also known as the House of Original Thought.



Mountain and farm (Finca Sagrada website)

"When we bought the land, we had an intuitive friend visiting from France," Walter said. "She told us that when she walked the land, spiritual children came to her and told her they wanted to show her their temple school. She sat on some rocks there for a while and, through her, we learned more about this land as a sacred site."

Not long after, through Susan's connection to the Fountain, a group working to bring feminine and indigenous values to economics, the couple hosted the Fountain's annual meeting. At that time representatives from the Kogi, indigenous people of Columbia who have referred to uninitiated others as the "younger brothers," came too.

"Before the Kogi do anything, they ask Spirit through divination," Walter explained in telling the origins of the Spirit House. "Spirit told them to visit four times to reactive the ancient sites here." He told us they had shown him two such sites, an ancient circle of stones near the Spirit House that he said had been used for male ceremonies and that had been constructed close to the river along the northern farm boundary. Another site further away, on the



Spirit House with 'antenna' that the Kogi use to energetically communicate with the spirits of the farm.

southern boundary, which we did not see, had been identified by the Kogi as a site of female rituals.

"The third time the Kogi visited, we were invited and told how to build the Spirit House," Walter said.

Once the space had been finished, it replicated the Kogi's own Spirit House in Columbia, down to its two "antenna" on top through which the Kogi promised to communicate with the couple. So the Kogi ceremonially blessed the building during its first fire built in the fire pit. It was then they told Walter the fire was to be perpetual, that it was not to go out. They told him, "the gods cry if the fire goes out."

Though Walter and Susan had not expected such a requirement, they took the Kogi seriously. Behind the Spirit House, in a landscape where trees do not grow tall, they have managed to set aside a large, stacked pile of wood. And in the several years since completion of the house, the fire has only briefly gone out once or twice when someone forgot to keep it stoked. Walter tends to go to the house at night to drum and meditate near the fire, as do others on the farm at various times during the day. At one point, when Walter thought he might have to sell the farm, he consulted the Kogi. The Kogi "looked into sky—they were talking to Spirit—and then they said the lands were not for sale."

Again, he took them seriously, and thus began his journey to transition the farm into a community-owned and managed property, with the farm house ultimately intended to become a retreat and educational center.

Like a colorful Ecuadorian weaving, Walter's journey has taken him on varied adventures that have linked his life to land stretching from Borneo to Europe, New Zealand to America, and now from America to Ecuador. Here, in Ecuador, the pattern of his life has come full circle, much like Parsifal's, as he aims to transform the work he has always known and practiced—biodynamic farming—into something deeper and more healing, perhaps even at the level of intention with which Rudolf Steiner first offered the Agriculture Course. Finca Sagrada, Sacred Farm, has gone a step beyond biodynamic principles to incorporate guidance from the Kogi, which has set in motion a level of communal action that, as a privately-owned farm, would not be possible.

"We can do things here that we couldn't do in the States. We can do good things here," he said.

"The realms of life are many. For each one special sciences develop. But life itself is a unity, and the more deeply the sciences try to penetrate into their separate realms, the more they withdraw themselves from the vision of the world as a living whole."

Rudolf Steiner

Walter also is the author of *A Farmer's Love: Living Biodynamics and the Meaning of Community*. Amazon review notes that the book reveals how the author's "relationship to the Earth evolved from an experience of basic utility to an experience of abiding love."



Coffee plant (Finca Sagrada website)



Walter's wood-fired oven has the representation of an eagle on one side and a condor on the other, symbolizing the time when peace allows these two birds to fly together.



Citrus grows easily on Walter's farm and elsewhere in the valley



Bread from Finca Sagrada oven (Finca Sagrada website)

Love is in the Earth: Raising Healthy Microbes

Leisha Naja

I have made medicines since childhood. At five years old, I made my first medicine—rose water from *all* the roses in my mother's garden. I think I took every single petal. Much later, in my medicine making career, I learned the *weed* plants of the Canadian North, discovering the many foods and medicines that come from them. As a practicing naturopath in Canada, I also offered plant walks to friends and clients, helping them find connection to Nature's medicine. Today I surround myself with my Ecuadorian gardens from which I mix up medicines for the people—for my Ecuadorian community. You could say I have always focused on plants. But I haven't always focused on the soil they emerge from. This happened only later, after I moved from chilly Canada to warm and welcoming Ecuador.

I arrived in Vilcabamba on November 1, 2011—the Day of the Dead, celebrated here and in other countries in Latin and South America. My decision came as a spontaneous life choice, following the break-down of a 25-year marriage. It was a turning point, you might say, a change from my years in Canada where I had been born and lived much of my life. By the time I came to Ecuador I had spent more than 30 years learning how to be self-sufficient in the cold North. I also had learned two things well: 1) you cannot live in a self-sufficient way in snowy Canada without a community, and 2) you also cannot be self-sufficient without money or at least without some investment in solar power, green houses, or related off-grid technologies. Though I did not accomplish this in the North, I held onto my vision and brought the desire for self-sufficiency and community with me to Ecuador.

So I now make medicines for the people from the plants I organically grow in my garden. I alchemize the power of the plants in many ways, using soxhlet infusions (a method of extraction from a solid), water, oil, and also slow infusions. During my eleven years in Ecuador, I have learned the power of the local plants, though I also rely on the so-called weeds that came with me from the North.

I truly enjoy compounding and blending different herbs for my clients' different issues. Since everyone is unique, I enjoy finding the right personalized herbs to tincture as support for their health issues. Knowing how to do this and what to test for, of course, comes from my naturopathic training. When I list the herbal compounds on tincture labels, I do so with the hope my clients will get to know and connect to these plants as their *heroes* if they are not already familiar with them.

Throughout all these years and my transition from Canada to Ecuador, the earth has been my focus, or at least the plants that grow from it have been my focus. I have long felt that if we could just learn enough about the soil and what grew from it, then we would be able to better support each other to heal. At the time, I felt the healers were the plants. I still feel that way but, since coming to Ecuador, the lenses through which I view healing have changed and my view has broadened.

I became inspired to work with soil microbes here when two dear friends studying with Dr Elaine Ingham in California visited me in Ecuador. We tested my soil under my microscope. Remember, I have been an organic gardener for years. Still, my friends told me I had no microbes.

How could that be, I wondered. It puzzled me. How could they say that when my garden appeared to be thriving? Everywhere, plants carried on their life cycles as they had forever, at least as far as I knew. But the microscopic view of our soil said something different. I wanted to know why. I had to understand what was going on. I was hooked. I knew a little about biodynamics but not enough to be practicing it. I considered myself an organic gardener, however, and had grown my own food that way for years. Still, my soil told another story.

Since I didn't have enough funds to cover the school tuition, my friends helped me acquire a scholarship. Dr. Elaine Ingham's Soil Food Web School offered online class attendance, which certainly worked for me in Ecuador. I knew that by attending her classes I would have the foundational knowledge of the soil food web that I needed to begin to make a difference for both the plants I grew and the people I had come to help. Dr. Elaine's nearly four decades of soil research had made her a leading figure in regenerative agriculture circles where she has made some fairly bold statements. One of the important ones that she has lectured about for some time is that virtually all soils around the planet have all the nutrients our plants need to grow without the use of fertilizers. That sounded extraordinary to me, and I wanted to know more.

My subsequent study was a humbling experience, both when it came to understanding soil and also to realizing the mistakes I'd made with clients in the past, and with my own health as well. I remember the day it hit me—the day when I realized that much of what I had been doing and recommending to others was, in fact, “an act of war” on nature. I had taught my clients to detox and use other cleanse techniques to destroy the so-called bad guys in



Building compost as food for microbes.

their bodies. Although considered natural, this approach and the intention behind it was really no different than the approach used with allopathic chemicals. After this surprise understanding, I worked even harder to adjust my perceptions of what healthy soil really was. Before my partner, Jim, passed away, he asked me to stay focused on my studies and to continue on this path. We both had come to believe in the soil's ability to heal itself, with a little help from the friendly microbes who called the soil home and wanted only to multiply.

The gardens of the human body are very similar to the

gardens of the soil. Both of these webs are entwined. To understand these connections and how each depends and relies on the health of the other is to begin to change some long held human beliefs. These beliefs have allowed humans to treat the soil as a dead surface, a platform that can hold up our buildings but has little to do with our own health and the health of our families. The germ theory and the subsequent use of antibiotics (meaning “against life”) to destroy pathogens has laid the foundation for the chronic diseases we experience today, diseases caused by imbalances in the system—whether the soil system or that of the

human body. Balance is maintained by beneficial microbes working symbiotically with plants and humans to ensure health and encourage life. There is no end to what we can learn and discover by supporting these webs of interconnections created by the microbes.

Dr. Elaine observed recently, “I look forward to seeing the next generation of soil regeneration researchers improve on what I have found. There are so many things we don’t yet understand that the sky is the limit! Maybe even farther!” That we have only scratched the surface of what can be known about what is under our feet continues to inspire me.

The Soil Food Web curriculum makes precise, provable science the goal for all students—something that, as an adult learner, has challenged me. Nevertheless, I have learned so much that my perspective has dramatically

changed. I have come together with a team of others I refer to as the *Soil Squad* here in Ecuador. Several of them also are attending Dr. Elaine’s school, and, like me, have almost finished the program.

The Soil Squad is taking what we have learned and directly applying it to the fields where we grow our compost, and ultimately our food gardens. Currently, we are mass producing microbe composts, which makes us microbe farmers. Our team is a blend of people from other countries (I am one of them) committed to the work here and also locals, each of us sharing a common mission to increase the microbes available in our soils, and thus increase the health of the earth.

My own property has become a little neighborhood of *soil squaders* as we attempt to create a neighborhood land family with a common dream. Every pile of compost we create is different and, although we have discovered recipes



Author taking soil samples with a member of her team.



Nick, one of the Soil Squad, consults with the author about soil samples

that work, there are many factors that change the outcome (water, sun, seasonal differences).

In order to determine what works best, our most important tool is the microscope. With the microscope, we can see what is present in the compost and whether the good guys are home. Ecuador has an abundance of bacteria since it is semi tropical. Something is always breaking down or growing up. So, we create compost piles with ingredients that support fungi health. We also intentionally feed the protozoa by providing them their blend of food as they eat the bacteria (the web cycle that converts nutrition into an available form). As microbe compost scientists, we record temperature fluctuations, moisture content, smell, and visual clues to keep things on track for the *beneficials*. The good guy microbes thrive in aerobic conditions whereas the undesirables like the anaerobic environment. Every pile is unique. When we test the soils of our the farms and gardens, we determine the best microbe piles to help restore the soil food web on in those locations.

Understanding that human life and health depends on the microbes is the foundation of the work we are attempting to

solidify here in Villcabamba. First and foremost, we have come to understand that the microbes determine the nutrient uptake of the plants. Because we are still new at this work, we are not experts in understanding why this is true. Breaking old beliefs is hard, especially since some of us have spent decades fertilizing plants, thinking this is how to make them strong and nutritious.

Among the new understandings we have gained is that plants spend a lot of energy producing what is called *exudates*. Exudates is a fancy *science* word for gifts that the plant converts from sun energy (photosynthesis). Through their roots, plants send out requests for nutrition. When bacteria and fungi bring this nutrition to the plants' roots, the nutrients are not in a bioavailable form. So in comes the next level, referred to as predators, who consume the bacteria and fungi and, through their metabolism, make the nutrients available to the plants. Viola! These webs of relationship are similarly connected all the way up to the human being. I have learned that organic is not enough, because these webs of relationship are not cultivated, at least not cultivated the way organic gardening is practiced



Living food from Living Ground

now where we fed plants with fertilizers and spray with pesticides, no matter how *natural* these substances are.

Our commitment to healthy soil here has become so deeply rooted in each of us who are part of the Soil Squad that we are working to fully develop a project we call *Living Ground* or *Suelo Vivo*. At its fullest development, the project would operate pods focused on the microbes. For example, we plan to offer hands-on compost educational packages where people can learn the art and science of microbes, gardening, and alchemizing food. The project site has the potential for private, dormitory and family rooms for guests as we develop *health tourism* where guests can experience live blood analysis, receive a health protocol for their visit (treatments, special diet, food, juices) and enjoy the grounding available in the atmosphere of the microbe-sponsored gardens. We are planning a Microbe Education Center, a cafe offering healthy, microbe nurtured foods, and perhaps some form of community supported agriculture that would work here in Ecuador. These pods would be interdependent operations revolving around and connected to restoring, maintaining, and ultimately creating a kind of sanctuary for the good guy microbes.

Currently, we are negotiating for land that would become our project site. Fundraising is underway, and we have had various offers of support. You can watch a video about the site by going to the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/3f4er6k5>. Although the ground has been injured by heavy machinery and refueling in the past, it has the potential to shine as the new home of the good little guys, the microbes to which we all owe our health. The video includes a list of the *pods* we currently are considering and that are waiting to become reality.

Ecuador is a perfect place for this work as we can grow food all year round. Like elsewhere in the world, soil damage is present here too—soil microbes have been harmed through a variety of practices that have left what might once have been rich soils sadly denatured. Some scientific studies suggest the planet has only have 50 years of agricultural soil left. What then? Supporting healthy microbes offers an answer, whether those who do this know as much as Dr. Elaine or are just starting their journey in commitment to natural processes.

I always have felt that we need Nature more than she needs us. Surely she would continue if we are not here. Nevertheless, the planet is at a point where it is still possible to help restore Nature's natural processes, allowing us to be *good guys* in the web of life. Nature can spit us out or we can become the skillful *gardeners* of her web. Human intelligence has been referred to as the flower of Nature's creations. I feel she needs us to continue blooming her flowers. So perhaps that is our mission that we can hold in common—to get back into her garden, in our place, to live our potential by assisting in the restoration of her beautiful soil.

Leisha Naja is the founder of Suelo Vivo/Living Ground. Photos courtesy of Living Ground.



Freedom, Love, and Goodness: A Further Look at Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom (Part 1)

Max Leyf Treinen, PhD

Every way of knowing becomes a way of living, every epistemology becomes an ethic.

—Parker Palmer, *Toward a Spirituality of Higher Education*

All biodynamic knowledge is derived from a state of attunement of the human soul to the world soul. Traditionally, the human being has been understood as the interface between heaven and earth, and a holographic compendium of the entire cosmos. Rudolf Steiner's definition of Anthroposophy as "consciousness of one's humanity"¹ points to a *mode of being* more than any specific *teaching* or *factual content*. Hence, consciousness of one's humanity describes a state of correspondence of the microcosm with the entire universe in the manner that a drop of dew in the morning bears the image of all the heavens. Biodynamics emerges as a spiritual way of knowing applied to the specialized field of agriculture. It is not a doctrine but rather a way of seeing and a way of living.

Thus, biodynamic farming offers a way of fulfilling the end

and function of the human being, akin to what Heidegger describes as "[serving as] the shepherd of being."² In the final year of his life, Steiner characterized Anthroposophy as "a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe."³ The converse holds equally well: the task of the free human being is also to guide the spiritual in the natural universe back into the human being. How are we to approach this?

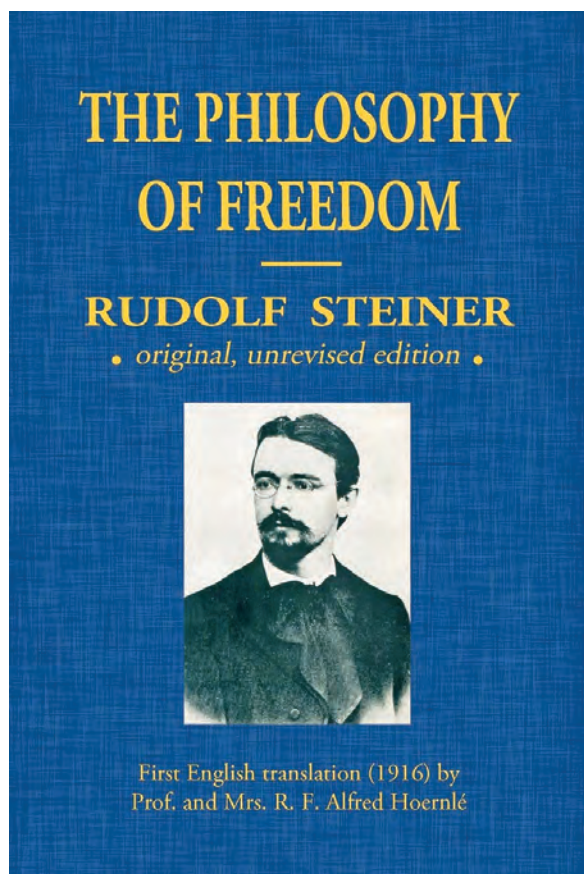
Freedom, love, and goodness are three different words, but they are not three separate things. Instead, love can be seen as the power and principle that calls us towards a perceived good. Freedom, in turn, can be seen as our capacity to respond to such a call. Love establishes a union between beings that does not abolish their differences. Instead, the union is spiritual in that it is established under a common ideal: namely, willing the good for the other.

It is possible to write "Because I love the turnip, I shall intend the worst for it" as a sentence, but it is not possible to mean it because the proposition is incoherent. It is also possible to state contradictions such as "black is white" or "triangles have seven sides." The fact that we can write a nonsensical statement only demonstrates that words can be torn from their concrete matrices of meaning and treated as discrete abstractions.

Concretely conceived, to love a thing means to affirm that thing in its existence and fruition. In other words, to love a thing is to intend the good of that thing. To intend the good of another is to unite in spirit with that other, insofar as all beings also intend the good for themselves and hence are existentially constituted by a sort of unconscious self-love. But more significantly, all beings exist in virtue of God's love. Hence, to love another is also to "unite in spirit" with God and hence, to love God.⁴ It is not by accident that we say God is love.

Love can also be understood as the principle of new Creation. What else could the scriptures mean when we read that "God saw that it was good,"⁵ other than that God recognized Creation to be a worthy object of love? Love can be seen, by extension, as the power that enthuses one to transform. What I do not love will not move me. On the contrary, my love for a thing or being fires my will to action.

Love is such a familiar word and is so closely bound up with associations of particular emotional experiences that one is likely to regard such love as already understood. We must not risk confusing a feeling of familiarity for *bona*



fide understanding, nor conflate being able to use the term in a sentence with being able to use the principle towards which the term gestures in real life. Naturally, there is no limit to what could be set down about love.⁶

To understand love in itself and not merely in one of its particular subjective expressions, we should have to inquire what inspires the latter in us under the proper conditions. Otherwise, we would fall into the childish mistake of presuming the light of day to vanish every time we close our eyes. When we close our eyes, it is obviously our vision that departs and not the light itself. In the same way, my subjective emotional experience of love emerges in specific conditions and ceases in others. From the absence of a particular subjective emotional experience of love, however, I can only infer that the *eye of my heart* has closed, not that love itself has ceased to exist. But, as has been suggested, a change in the condition of the heart is a change in the condition of the person.

If I wish to know how I may become a better carpenter, the answer would be very straightforward: I must develop my skill in carpentry. To ask how I may become a better carpenter presupposes a will to improve without which the question could only remain hypothetical. Naturally, the will to improve, alone, is not enough to guarantee results. At the same time, this will is the *sine qua non* for any achievement of this sort. Where there's a will, there's a way, it has been said.

Where the will is lacking we can say that love is lacking. More comprehensively, we may wonder where the will to undertake such development comes from. The initiative to develop as a carpenter is transcendental to the skill of carpentry. Thus, a question of carpentry has, in this way, transformed into a question of the individual moral and spiritual nature. This will be clear when we consider that not every person can will all things. Instead, what we intend is a function of *who* we are. To imagine that the first thing can be arbitrarily commanded except by way of the second is a superstition that it is possible to entertain only up to the point of actually attempting this feat, as many great thinkers throughout history have observed. Perhaps most memorable among these is Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, where he concedes with exasperation that his will does not seem to be his own, "...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."⁷

Despite that Paul concedes his incapacity to perform the good that he would do, the internal struggle that he gives expression to is not without value. Precisely by juxtaposing a higher function of the will that is unified towards the Good against the lower will that is fragmented among myriad disconnected desires, Paul discloses this higher part of our own souls. It must be duly observed that the juxtaposition of this

higher function of the will against a lower one follows from the spiritual and moral disposition of the individual in question. Only one of this disposition will be inclined to set up this internal friction necessary to kindle a will that is was transcendent to any given the situation they described in that only one of such a disposition would be inclined to pose such questions to begin with, and furthermore to pit himself against misdirected impulses that emerge from within. Anyone lacking this disposition will simply not be bothered to deny his appetites in this way.

In the first chapter of *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Rudolf Steiner paraphrases Paul's insight when he quotes the philosopher Robert Hamerling to the effect that "Man can certainly do as he wills, but he cannot want as he wills, because his wanting is determined by motives." From this, Hammerling concludes that freedom of the will is a contradiction in terms. Steiner finds Hammerling's reasoning unconvincing, however, because it fails to take its departure from an adequate concept of freedom. The primary question, Steiner counters:

*is not whether I can do a thing or not when a motive has worked upon me, but whether there are any motives except such as impel me with absolute necessity. If I am compelled to want something, then I may well be absolutely indifferent as to whether I can also do it. And if, through my character, or through circumstances prevailing in my environment, a motive is forced on me which to my thinking is unreasonable, then I should even have to be glad if I could not do what I want. The question is not whether I can carry out a decision once made, but how the decision comes about within me.*⁸

To be free to do something without possessing any reason to do it is a sort of contradiction in terms. Instead, Steiner argues that knowledge, and consciousness of one's reasons for acting, is the soil from which the flower of freedom may emerge. As Steiner emphasized, if a "motive is forced on me which to my thinking is unreasonable, then I should even have to be glad if I could not do what I want." Freedom, indeed, is the inverse of being forced to perform an action that one's thinking has determined to be unreasonable. In other words, freedom is to act for reasons that one has fostered and evaluated in the clarity of thought. A motive that is begotten in the clarity of thought will never see the light of day unless one has, through the same capacity of thinking, judged it to be good. As Steiner affirms: *The question is not whether I can carry out a decision once made, but how the decision comes about within me.*

If the decision comes about through knowledge and with consciousness, its volitional expression through deed

and decision is also an expression of freedom. In other words, freedom is a state of coherence between my actions and what my thinking has perceived to be good. Insofar as the latter is mistaken or perverted, and I am unconscious of my error, I am unfree and as a result, will act in a manner that will be harmful to myself and to all Creation.

Notes

- 1) Steiner, *Awakening to Community* IV: The term “Anthroposophy” should really be understood as synonymous with “Sophia,” meaning the content of consciousness, the soul attitude and experience that make a man a full-fledged human being. The right interpretation of “Anthroposophy” is not “the wisdom of man,” but rather “the consciousness of one’s humanity.” In other words, the reversing of the will, the experiencing of knowledge, and one’s participation in the time’s destiny, should all aim at giving the soul a certain direction of consciousness, a “Sophia.” <https://tinyurl.com/uhay8kzc>
- 2) “Hirt des Seins,” from Martin Heidegger’s *Basic Writings*.
- 3) Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, §1. <https://tinyurl.com/yh96s6zd>.
- 4) This point is belabored in the First Epistle of John: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. (1 John 4: 7–12)
- 5) Genesis 1:9.
- 6) The present author has explored the theme of love in relation to Steiner’s *Philosophy of Freedom* in greater depth on another occasion, which has been published at <https://tinyurl.com/sw2j2whd>.
- 7) Romans 7: 18–19.
- 8) Steiner, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Chapter I, <https://tinyurl.com/2p9he4wp>.

Max Leyf is a Rolfer, philosopher, and anthroposopher from Alaska. He teaches ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, and introduction to philosophy at a local university in Anchorage where he also maintains a Roling practice called The Way of the Elbow. Visit his website at theoriapress.substack.com.

Remembering Maria C. Linder

JPI owes much to Maria C. Linder who crossed the Threshold September 27, 2022. She was 83. A nationally recognized scientist who mentored numerous research students during her 45-year career at Cal State Fullerton, she first worked in Ehrenfried Pfeiffer’s lab in Spring Valley, NY, part of the Threefold Community, in the late 1950s and early 1960s before she went on to graduate school. She was the representative for the Pfeiffer Foundation when the rights and formula for the Pfeiffer Compost Starter and Field Spray were transferred to JPI. Both products are an important gift to soils, making it easy for beginners in biodynamics to give their land the benefits of the preparations in an easy-to-use form.

During Ms. Linder’s career she published more than 100 scholarly articles, authored books with some of her students, and received more than \$12 million in research grants. But her greatest gift to the future, one she took great pride in, was her mentorship of young biochemists. Through them, her gift to Earth continues.



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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.

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JPI welcomes your contributions of dandelions, chamomile, and yarrow for our preparations. Now is the season to collect dandelions! Your efforts ensure an adequate supply of BD 506. Thank you to all those who have contributed in the past. Dandelion blossoms are best picked in the morning on the first day that they open when they have a tight center of unopened petals. See <https://tinyurl.com/2s3jdmmr> for more information on picking and drying.

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

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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*)

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BD 507—Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

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“The knowledge of such things will relate agriculture in a most intimate way—and in a thoroughly objective way—to the social life as a whole. It is infinitely important that agriculture should be so related to the social life.”

Rudolf Steiner, *The Agriculture Course* (Adams translation), p. 149



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