

Introduction

The BDA – the UK’s Biodynamic Association - asked itself who it really was and how did it become this way, in the hope that this would assist it to find its role in addressing the ecological crisis which surely defines our times. In early 2020 it commissioned a process (*‘Genius personae’*) for this reflection and I feel fortunate to have assisted by looking through various archives of materials and presenting the findings as a hefty report and [digital timeline](#).

The report in particular has my fingerprints all over it and I have no doubt that other archivists would have brought other dynamics and issues to the fore. Therefore, I requested that the rest of the team responsible for the whole *genius personae* process produce their own conclusions as addenda to the report. Only one other was forthcoming.

Now the whole process appears to be stuck and 2 years after the report was submitted little or nothing has come back to the membership for them to contemplate: the report is not generally available.

I don’t own that process so the report and other opinions about the BDA’s role will have to emerge in whatever form they take and whenever the commissioners can and will. However, I own my conclusions and wish to have these ‘out there’. Those familiar with my opinions will find little new but I am happy to bang on about them yet again because I think that BD has so much more potential than has currently been realised and that the world needs that potential to be fleshed out in grounded activity.

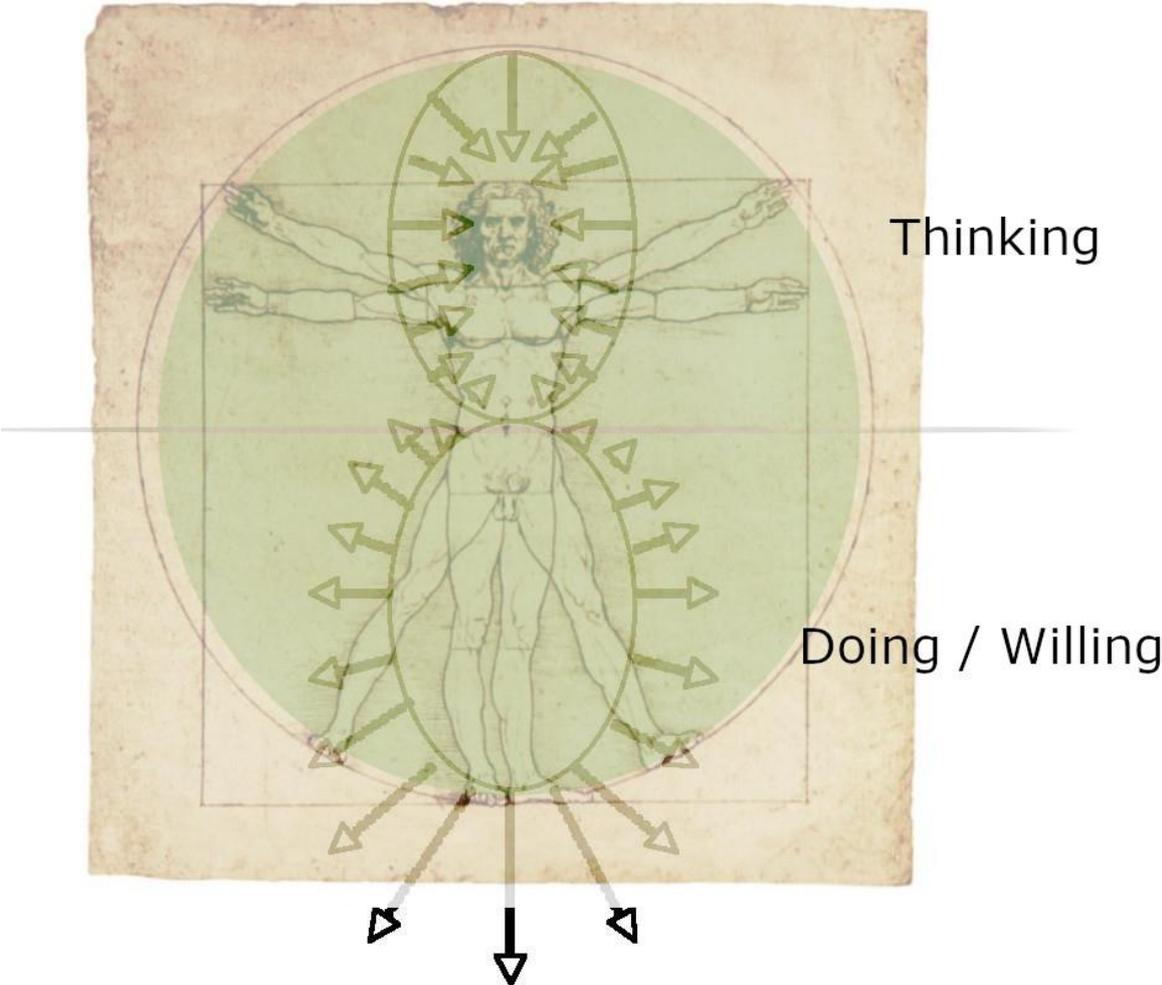
What you are reading here is my *Discussion and Conclusion* from that thousand-page report, slightly adapted because the links don’t all work without the context of the whole report.

Mark Moodie
July 2023

GENIUS PERSONAE REPORT

Biodynamic Agriculture in the UK

2021



Discussion and Conclusion

Mark Moodie. Summer 2021

Personal conflicts

Biodynamic agriculture is carried by individuals and if any of these people are perfect they have managed to keep this to themselves. This report has gone into some detail of the impact of this state of affairs in the fighting that dominated anthroposophical collegial activity from 1925 to 1935, and the turbulence that it left for many decades. It is easier to reveal such early struggles than those nearer in time. Some of the latter are touched upon in the transcripts of interviews in the appendix to the full report but what would be gained by further probing and revelation? There is not the necessary distance to come to even provisional judgement and most of the participants are still alive. It is out of the efforts of those directly involved that any healing impulse might come.

What one might legitimately deduce, however, is that there will always be 'people stuff' in an organisation and that such stuff cannot be legislated away. Perhaps this is even more the case in an organisation that brings people together from such diverse approaches as was indicated in the section on the *School of Michael*¹, who are working together against the cultural tides.

What might be profitable, however, is to clarify the form, purpose and aims of the BDA. It is hoped that this *Genius Personae* project can contribute towards such a goal. With such clarity, and with an agreed and appropriate form of governance, the conflicts which will inevitably arise might have a reduced impact on the common project.

Given that 'people stuff' will not be tidied away one can recognise the need for forgiving trespasses as a fundamental and ongoing foundation for any such communal striving.

The basics

Any discipline which wishes to establish itself in modern times would ideally have two things in place: a clear explanation of how it works, and varied demonstrations of its success. Almost any other discipline has been built upon basic original hypotheses and shown a slow build-up of experience- and experiment-led exploration as time elapsed. Maturation reveals, although perhaps not in a constant trajectory, an ever-greater perfection of that discipline's scope and accuracy, and thus of its efficacy.

BD, by stark contrast, started when a non-farmer gave some opaque lectures in a far-away manor house to those who are often labelled 'believers' or occasionally 'students'. These students and their successors have failed to reach consensus about what was presented almost 100 years ago and to develop the discipline for modern agricultural challenges. Perhaps the Agriculture course is a simple document which some have overcomplicated unnecessarily. On the other hand, perhaps it is a glimpse into an intensely complex endeavour and we lack the necessarily energetic collective research to reveal its full import.

Focussing on the practical side, does the implementation of biodynamics give encouragement that excellent agriculture would arise from this source? Whilst a sympathetic person could say yes to this question, such an opinion is no 'slam dunk' in the face of scepticism. Those proposing the motion might point to some transformed soils in Australia, some robust vegetables, or to an oenophile's blog, and even towards a rare trial with controls and good evaluation protocols such as the DOK trials.

¹ Some links have been removed from the original report since these linked to sections that are not available in this excerpt.

Whilst the social and environmental benefits that attend the movement are impressive and stand up to comparison with agribusiness's full-cost-accounting bottom line, is this any more the case than the practice of a thoughtful organic grower? Have the defining biodynamic practices demonstrated that they are necessary and sufficient for moving us out of the current crisis?

Given that 'no' is the answer of the majority, the landscape is set for all the dramas and challenges facing the BDA today. It holds the UK guardianship of a discipline which has attracted people of various inclinations (head-bound scientists, vibe-oriented intuitive types, practical workers) for a huge range of reasons (intuition, environmental despair, curiosity, some isolated experience) and these folk want to work together to further their hope that BD in the UK will show its full potential. And then it has a role to protect BD from the sceptic² or those with active ill-will and does not have sufficient material in its past to repel all boarders. Between the wish to support the various approaches of sympathetic folk, and to resist the attacks of those with antipathy, or simply to encourage the potential of BD to emerge with a difficult founding document and insufficient 'proof' - the task is not going to be easy.

Yet there is support for BD and there is a hunger that BD could satisfy despite the challenges outlined above. How might the BDA in the UK best fulfil its guardianship role?

Throughout the *genius personae* process, persistent themes and issues have arisen. In the hope of clarifying the discussion of these issues a suitable pictorial form has been selected to consider them in context. The same image can be used for many of these themes.

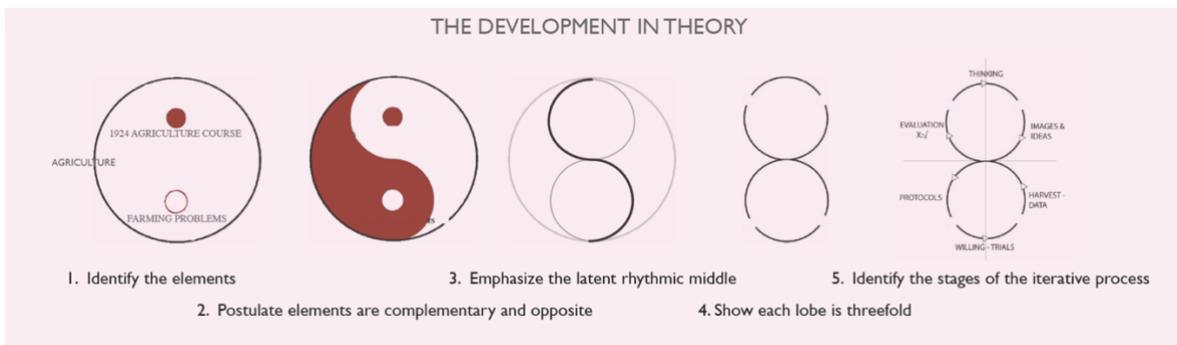
UK BD R&D

The basic diagram/image is familiar to students of Dr Steiner: the 'lemniscate' indicates a variety of ways that complementary and opposite phenomena interact. It is culturally represented as the moebius strip, the sign for infinity, as Virgin Media's logo and now also of Meta and the 2022 Qatar world cup! - and is one of a host of symbols which portray the same dynamic: the Star of David, the Masons' compass and square, or the Taijitu³ of oriental philosophy.

It is good to bear in mind that the lemniscate is an archetype that can be applied to any situation which relates complementary opposites to each other. Here we are using it specifically to track an ideal developmental process of how biodynamics might grow strong in the UK. From left to right in the progression below one can track the theoretical route from Koberwitz 1924 to a healthy biodynamic present and future.

² [Nobel-winner Parisi blasts anti-science drift](#). Physicist cites biodynamic agriculture, opposition to vaccines. ROME, NOV 22, 2021 - Nobel Prize-winning Italian physicist on Monday blasted a rise in unscientific beliefs such as opposition to vaccines. "There are strong anti-scientific tendencies in today's society," Parisi said during a lecture for the opening of the academic year at Rome's La Sapienza University. "The prestige of science and trust in it are diminishing fast. Together with voracious technological consumerism, astrological, homeopathic and anti-science practices are spreading widely, see the anti-vax movement, for example, and a frankly witchcraft-like practice like biodynamic agriculture is set to be recognized by a law of the Italian State".

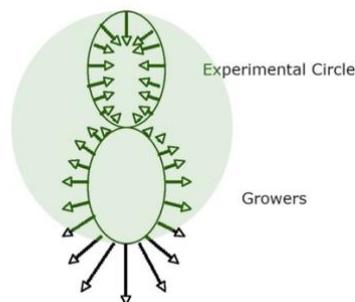
³ The ying yang sign. Whilst [Wikipedia](#) says "A taijitu is a symbol or diagram in Chinese philosophy representing Taiji in both its monist and its dualist aspects," the anthroposophical lemniscate is more explicit in showing a third mediating aspect between the complementary opposite poles.



The outer circle – the circle is the monist icon *par excellence* - represents the whole arena of biodynamic agriculture in the UK. The dualistic poles of the lemniscate are, first, the inner developmental research activity drenched in anthroposophical understandings and labels, and then the outer manifestation of biodynamic agriculture in the UK. If we designate the worldly manifestation as an expansive sulphuric⁴ pole we would identify it with the biodynamic the farms, gardens, Orchards, apiaries and woodland that anyone can visit, together with the physical preparations and instructions for their application. The contractive ‘salt’ pole is formed from the deliberations of those who strive to work towards and out of an understanding of biodynamics from its anthroposophically charted foundations up – primarily manifest, in theory at least, as the Experimental Circle.

When these poles become polarised and do not communicate with or flow into each other, any lemniscate will be static and lifeless, stagnating in purely self-referential processes, dogmatism and ungrounded chat. It would manifest as researchers caught up in their theories and unable to survive peer review, isolated from the farmers who just ‘get on with it’. This is unable to address the issues of the day. Such a lemniscate withers away.

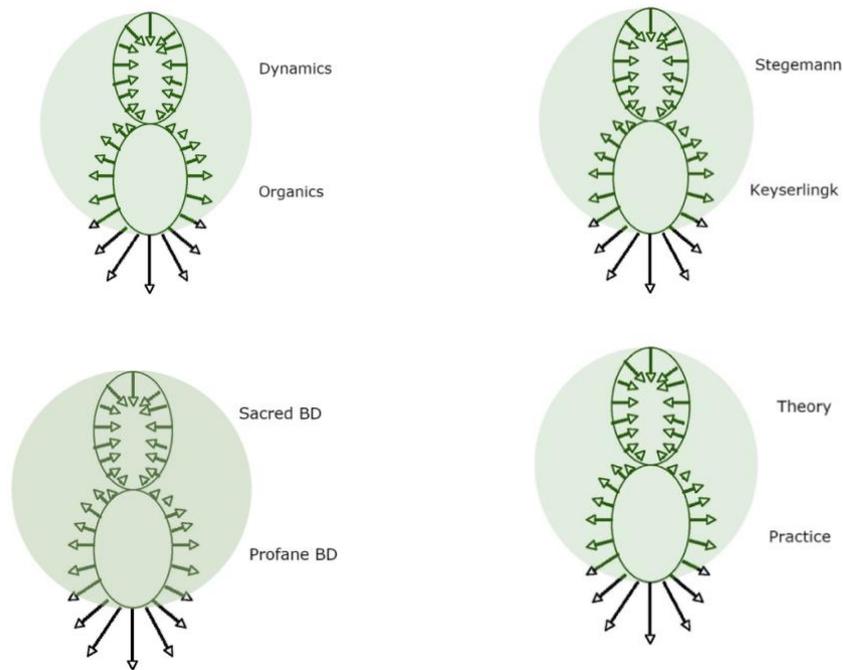
Alternatively, it could be a creative tension, pumping and vibrant so that the initiatives of the upper pole - innovations based on the fullness of anthroposophy - do in fact ‘seek the truly practical life⁵’ within the present realities of farming and gardening. Here the R&D iteratively seeks out and addresses the problems which called forth the innovations in the first place. That energy would flow back from the growers to researchers in the form of reality-checking feedback and data, requests and suggestions for increased efficacy, and in the form of enquiries concerning ever new practical concerns.



The same image that encompasses this dynamic can be re-labelled, and perhaps this will help illuminate several of the issues covered below.

⁴ This language is that of alchemy with the complementary opposite poles being that of *sulphur* (orientated outwards) and *salt* (inwardly oriented) mediated by the rhythmical *mercurial* interaction.

⁵ “Seek the truly practical life, but seek it in such a way that it does not blind you to the spirit working in it. Seek the spirit, but seek it not out of spiritual greed, but so that you may apply it in the genuinely practical life.” Dr Steiner



Are all aspects thriving in BD in the UK? It would appear that, in the UK at least, neither of the lobes is particularly robust and don't interact much, and if that is the case how could the whole be in good shape? Compared with the situation on the continent, as pointed out by *Ueli Heuter*⁶, there is very little biodynamic food available in the shops here – an indicator that the outer face of UK biodynamics is absent or pale. Observing the other pole, if we scan the paperwork generated over the years it would seem that there has been a lot of activity in the experimental circle but to what effect?

At Koberwitz [Dr Steiner suggested](#) that the Experimental Circle would try things out and report back to the Goetheanum who would comment and suggest what might improve their situation. Clearly '*the Goetheanum*'⁷ in this context would originally have meant Dr Steiner who would continue guiding others (Pfeiffer, Wachsmuth, Kolisko, Wegman, Schmidt ...) to become familiar enough with his approach and insights so that he would no longer be an indispensable part of this process. But he died sooner than would have been ideal and one can at least ask whether the team left behind were able to carry the responsibilities of nurturing this fledgling discipline. If the originator of that discipline was not available to train and develop his successors then is biodynamics always to be hampered?

In theory, theory and practice are the same thing. In practice they're not.

Ideally there would be a clearly structured reservoir of research after almost 100 years since Dr Steiner's course. There would be those who have found their way far enough into the esoteric foundations of the course (and anthroposophy in general) to be able to draw from that source ever anew in the light of the new challenges facing agriculture and the changes in the etheric configuration of the Earth. It is fair to say that this is not the Experimental Circle of UK's strongest suit.

Hugh Ellis, calling the ideal circulation *breathing*, asked in the [News Sheet No 14](#) of 1949, "is all well with our Circle?"

It is just a year since my election to the Experimental Circle. I well remember how I imagined the Circle would be. I thought of a comparatively few members meeting together for intensive study and discussion of the Course or some other teaching of Dr Steiner's, I imagined them pooling practical experience and wise thought in questions raised by their work and study, and then all going back to their holdings to carry out further study and experiments. I visualised study and experiment as the 'breathing' activity of the individual Members, and their

⁶ In an otherwise confidential interview conducted for the Genius Personae process

⁷ "The Goetheanum is present where ever one works out of its spirit" – quoted by Manfred Klett. See below.

meeting and return home as the equivalent rhythm of the Circle. It did not occur to me that there would be some members who took part in this process rarely or never.

Perhaps I idealised too much: perhaps the picture was one for another generation. Or possibly I was basing my ideas on the scientific method to which I was accustomed. And yet... Is all well with our Circle? Are we forging ahead of current scientific thought, and discovering facts that Science will be glad to acknowledge in years to come? Have we anything to our credit as a Circle in any way comparable to what George Adams and Olive Whicher are accomplishing? Surely, to deserve our existence we should be the spearhead of the Anthroposophical Agricultural Movement and should aim at evolving thoughts as far ahead of our own time as those of Koberwitz were ahead of the thought of 1924.

Dr Steiner was never one to hang on to institutions that had lost their spiritual justification. Have we reached the time when we should say: "The Experimental Circle in this country has lost its original impulse. It would be better to dissolve it, and metamorphose it into something new that has a greater creative urge"?

In putting forward such a suggestion one cannot but be very conscious of one's own failings as a Member, and of one's own inadequacy to take part in something more vital. But these things in a sense are beside the point. The question is always "What is our responsibility to the Spiritual world, and are we fulfilling it?" Beside this, all personal questions are insignificant, and if I have expressed myself too radically I beg Fellow Members not to take offence. My striving is only towards what we can achieve together in future. Whether we feel that something new can come to birth, or whether we feel that the present form is adequate, let us review our position together in the News Sheet. This vehicle exists for the strengthening of the Circle activity. Let us know, above all, if there are any who disagree with the premise that the Circle exists for intensive work between its members and that, failing in that, it fails as a Circle.

One can read his peers' responses to this letter on the [same link](#). However, I cannot see that the issue was put to bed by them. For instance, the present writer echoed the same in 2011⁸ before leaving the Circle to seek a more vibrant research community.

When I first found biodynamics I assumed that there would be many more examples ... in which anthroposophical reasoning and experimental development would be mutually reinforcing to ground more of the huge potential of the agriculture course in relation to farming issues. However, despite the fact that this research process is well described by anthroposophical cartography, this process does not seem to be entrenched in biodynamics.

In the 1980s [John Soper](#) stated that little had been achieved by the Circle.

... Apart from the effects of the moon on plant growth, very little has since been done here except perhaps by [L. Edwards](#). Much development still awaits tomorrow⁹! Possibly in response to Rudolf Steiner's address to the Koberwitz gathering, the Experimental Circle was formed and monthly meetings were held to study selected lectures; but as in its German counterpart, **little if any actual experimental work has been instigated.**

In the 1990s a splinter group spun off from the main experimental circle calling itself the 'research group'. Though these were essentially the same people as in the main experimental circle, they clearly felt an unsatisfied need to 'do something' practical. Their nucleating issue was the appearance of the NZ flatworm but they too failed to achieve their goal.

[Katherine Castelliz](#) and [Alan Brockman](#) both had thoughts and expressed opinions about what their hopes were for the Circle. [Bernard Jarman](#) hoped and then implemented some changes so that the esoteric side of the Circle might be strengthened by connecting the UK Circle to the Goetheanum.

When Mike Atherton tried to reanimate the circle at the turn of the millennium he wrote to [Manfred Klett](#), who replied:

⁸ <https://www.considera.org/downloads/BDRResearch.pdf>

⁹ An allusion to the Kolisko's 'Agriculture of Tomorrow'

I very much appreciate your engagement to reveal the history of the Experimental Circle and thus to find out what its present task could be ... The predominating intention of the farmers attending the Agricultural Course was to found such a circle and ... to introduce spiritual research by experiment into practical work. The foundation finally took place after the third lecture, 11th June 1924, with an address by Rudolf Steiner.

In this address he outlines simply in two sentences what the task should be: literally translated "... what we need in Dornach, is a representation of each, who is willing to cooperate in the circle, what he has under the earth and what he has above the earth and how these two things work together. And what Dornach provides as science must be such, that it is well understood by even the most conservative peasant head"¹⁰.. ...

No doubt the Experimental Circle has been the original vessel, provided exoterically by the historical process, to receive, carry and foster the esoteric content of Agriculture Course. ... Rudolf Steiner was very practical minded. On the one hand he promoted on-farm research in order to improve farming and to deliver spiritual insights into this field of life, on the other hand his intention was to form a body linked to the Anthroposophical Society and, by some of its leading members, to the High School of Spiritual Science. ... **This unique disposition of an active interrelationship between periphery and centre, that is the High School of Spiritual Science, never really came into being.** The early death of Rudolf Steiner left as a legacy to us, the generations to come. The tragedy of the following decades was a threefold one. First! the historical events of the 20th century, especially the evil impact of the Nazi-regime in Middle Europe and World War II smashed this tender germ. Second the unity of the Anthroposophical Society broke and parts and pieces disconnected from one another and from the Goetheanum. I assume the historical becoming of the Experimental Circle in Great Britain, and somewhat its isolation and uncertainty about its tasks must be seen and can be understood on this background. Third and in my opinion the most essential reason for **the general inability to fulfil the intentions of Rudolf Steiner was and to a certain extent still is the fact that they are not fully understood in their practical and spiritual dimensions.** They were and still are too modern, too much related to an advanced stage of the consciousness soul. ... I would like to add a few remarks: Rudolf Steiner states: The task of the High School is to advance by spiritual research ever deeper into the esoteric as well as to work in the highest possible intensity into the public. "The knowledge of initiation must become the knowledge of civilisation". ...

Klett clearly identified the same issue in 2002 as today, and whilst credit must go to Bernard Jarman for taking up part of the challenge by reconnecting The Goetheanum and the UK circle¹¹, Klett also notes that "*The Goetheanum is present where ever one works out of its spirit*". One can ask if Dornach is really the right or only complement to the UK Experimental Circle. Whilst one would like to avoid false binaries and mistaking an either/or debate for a both/and debate¹², one can ask if all the graduates of Michael's academy are based in Switzerland. The whole issue of the connection between the folk spirits of the continent and the UK has arisen time and again in the *Genius Personae* process.

The UK has produced some remarkable insights into biodynamics and related subjects. Adams, Whicher, Edwards, Calderwood and Thomas have established a thorough framework and matching empirical findings for the forces recognised in biodynamics. If we can grant Lilly Kolisko a posthumous *Lola Budd* pass into team-UK, then the extraordinary work presented in *Agriculture of Tomorrow* could be added in. And the UK-BD scene can be justifiably proud of the activities in the social arena – Camphill, Sunfield, RMT, BDLT - which have established protective social microclimates in which BD could be

¹⁰ This was translated in the Agriculture Course appendix as ... "...from each one of you who wants to work in this Circle, we in Dornach will need a description of your farm in terms of what is above ground and what is below ground, and how these two things are working together. After all, if our advice is to be of any use, we need to know your circumstances quite exactly. What is meant here is what you know from your daily practice much better than we can know in Dornach: the soil structure of your individual farm, the amount and type of woodland, the crops that have been grown on the farm in the last few years, how the yields were, and so on. In short, everything that farmers themselves need to know in order to run their farms with intelligence – with peasant wisdom. What is on the farm, and what your individual experience with it has been – that is the kind of information we will need initially. This does not take long to describe."

¹¹ A parallel and more grass-roots attempt to bring the Germanic and English-speaking BD worlds together was made by Pat Thompson (then MacManaman) which became manifest in the IBIG conferences. These efforts stirred to life in 1984, and the first conference was in 1986.

¹² A truly insightful and gorgeously presented exploration of this is [available here!](#)

practiced in the face of the prevailing currents. But these bright lights have failed to come together sufficiently to sustain a thriving BD scene which might attract all farmers by the gravitational pull of its excellence.

What happened to Lilly Kolisko's work?

An enigma in all of this is the work of Lilly Kolisko. In the *Agriculture of Tomorrow* one feels that the kind of work that a thriving experimental circle should be producing is presented in all its ground-breaking genius. Not only does this work not galvanise the circle into building further and wider, Lilly is notable by her very absence from the circle. Only [in the one letter](#) do we hear Pfeiffer mention her work and then this is to call it a 'grave problem' – presumably because something from the 'secret' lobe of the ideal lemniscate peeks its head above the ramparts, endangering all in the BD bunker.

That some of Lilly Kolisko's original work may now be rotting in a barn in Wales has become known in the course of the *Genius Personae* process. That the human relationships surrounding this still appear to be fraught and fragile suggests that there is much energy to be liberated here. The timing also raises the possibility of associating this *coincidence*¹³ with the being of Biodynamics in the UK.

How should biodynamic agriculture best present itself in the UK?

A very clear thread runs throughout biodynamic history from its inception to right now. This issue is even coded into its name¹⁴. It is inherent in the nature of the situation: biodynamics is a form of agriculture whose core is alien to the culture in which it is embedded^{15, 16}. Everyone familiar with biodynamics can look back on when they first encountered filling cow horns with cow poo, or removing a farm animal's brain and filling the cavity with oak bark before putting it in stinky mud. We may have forgotten the shock but an echo can be noticed each time we introduce a newbie. Even without the shock and assuming good will, there is a fundamental reorientation, at least for an educated westerner, to grapple with etheric forces and astrality and their relation to the stars and planets.

Ernst Stegemann and Count Keyserlingk had, [according to Manfred Klett](#), already had a heated debate about such things at the first (unrecorded)¹⁷ experimental circle meeting at Breslau.

The foundation was agreed after a very sharp discussion between Count Keyserlingk and Ernst Stegemann. The latter put the main emphasis on the esoteric side, while count Keyserlingk preferred a practical exoteric orientation.

¹³ How would the sought-for Being of UK BD communicate with the non-clairvoyant? Jung flagged up *enantiodromia* – the relevant aspect of which for our present circumstances is to be particularly attentive to what comes towards participants during the 'courtship'. Such 'coincidences' are ignored at cost during this period: Lilly's research, the [Circular Letter 119](#) from Dornach, Glen Atkinson's presentations on [agriculture and medicine](#), new interpretations and [extension of the Koberwitz course](#)... ..

¹⁴ Nicolai Fuchs: "In 1929 a conversation with Erhard Bartsch gave rise to the name "biodynamic", which does not go back to Steiner: Erhard Bartsch had voted for the anthroposophical method Agriculture to be called "organic farming". Ernst Stegemann, however, advocated the term "dynamic farming", which is probably related to his deep connection to astronomy and weather events. The term "biodynamic farming" is attributable to the combination of these two approaches."

¹⁵ "... these thoughts do represent something quite foreign in the context of present day views." [Letter to Ita Wegman](#) from Dr Steiner whilst at Koberwitz.

¹⁶ One reaction, fortunately said with a twinkle in the eye, was that, "Biodynamics really is very efficient: with each bullet I can save the world from a homeopath, an astrologer, a Christian and a hippy who believes in fairies!"

¹⁷ - Some notes have emerged in 2021 and are intended to be part of the 9th edition of the Agriculture Course

Steiner himself referred to this at length when he spoke to the experimental circle at Koberwitz. Dr Steiner delineated two ways that the promotion of practical outcomes of anthroposophy can miss the mark. There are those who think that professionals (including farmers) can be made into anthroposophists at the drop of a *bonne mot* or two. Neither have such a sharp turning circle. Then he warned against “a sloppy patchwork of anthroposophy and [material] science. That will not bring us forward at all.”

Pfeiffer was very cautious about sharing too much of the background to biodynamics¹⁸. This was clear in his characterisation of Lilly Kolisko’s Agriculture of Tomorrow as a ‘grave problem’, and in his condemnation of the AAF in his letter to Lady Mackinnon.

Dr Meirs makes no clear line between the purely Anthroposophical endeavour and what is needed for the outside. He always asks through his way of publishing things that the outside has to take part immediately in Anthroposophical matters. This, I think, is not possible and also it is not right to ask the average farmer or gardener to show Anthroposophical interest at once. However, it should be our endeavour through the way in which we represent our practice and background in a business-like manner that people gradually become interested.

To Miss Nancy Fisher this opinion was spelled out further:

... there should by all means be maintained an internal circle of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners who do research work, investigation, and work out such schemes that the Anthroposophical agricultural ideas of Dr Steiner can be made understandable to the general public. In fact this internal group is the research group proper who bring down the message of the spiritual worlds into practical forms. .. Second, the Biodynamic Association is to represent the experience based on the application of the Biodynamic Method to the outer public, that is, to those farmers and gardeners who are not able or willing to deal with the Anthroposophical ideas... Since we are not able to convince every farmer and gardener of our Anthroposophical back-ground, it is, therefore necessary, of course, to have such an association as the Biodynamic Association, to help the farmer who does not want to deal with Anthroposophy. This is therefore the external work, the public representation towards the practical part as well as the scientific part. This is really our front line of attack and defence. If we keep these two things separate there will be no trouble ...

Perhaps the times have changed sufficiently to travel further down the path that Pfeiffer eschewed?

The role of the BDA

The lemniscate has clear vertical and horizontal axes. Both pass through and cross at the central point at the intersection of the two lobes of the lemniscate. One could label the area above the horizon as the area for internal work and that below as belonging to a worldly manifestation. If we were to borrow from Dr Steiner’s epistemological works we might keep the labels pithy as the hemispheres of *concepts* and *percepts*.

¹⁸ "In the Agricultural Course at Koberwitz, at which one or two of those here were also present, I indicated guiding lines for agriculture. An elderly farmer attended the course, who is also an old member of the Society. Throughout the whole of the course he could not rid himself of a feeling of misgiving; it kept coming out in the discussions. Again and again he would say: 'But if we do that, we shall be using occult means for practical ends; won't that be steering too close to the sphere of ethics? Could not these truths be applied also in a wrong way?' He was never able to get rid of this scruple; he was always suspicious of black magic in the application. Needless to say, these things do become black magic when they are not handled as they ought to be handled. And it was for this reason that I said once on that occasion quite explicitly: 'A high standard of morality is absolutely essential in dealing with these matters; therefore, I assume at the outset that those who attend this course attend it on purely ethical grounds, desirous only to serve humanity and help agriculture. The Agricultural Experimental Circle has accordingly to be regarded also as an ethical circle, which definitely sets itself the task of seeing that the truths are applied in the right and proper way.' The Gods use magic, and the difference between white and black magic consists only in this: in white magic one intervenes in a moral, selfless way, and in black magic in an immoral, selfish way. There is no other difference." - R. Steiner [Curative Education Course](#)

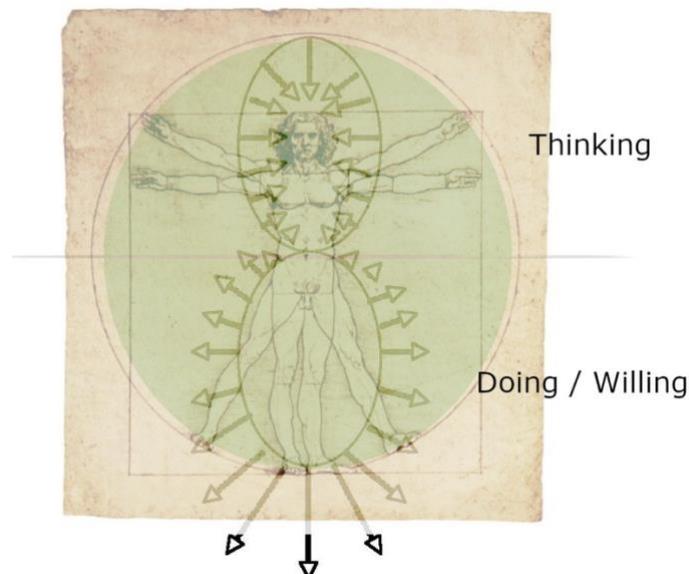
Again, simplifying slightly, we can put labels to the vertical axis and note that the upper inner-orientated lobe is dominated by inner efforts, the lower by doing. If we place an archetypal human being on this axis we can ask, 'what is this central point which mediates between thinking and willing?'

I would like to suggest that in a healthy version of the modern era, one which is striving to achieve freedom and love, this vertical axis needs active efforts to be upright, to keep the thinking and willing in an active and mutual circulation and to be the pump which becomes capable of invigorating the research and the manifestation of biodynamics.

This suggests a blueprint for husbanding biodynamics in the UK in the 21st century – the seed question behind this report. The Association would be clear in its several responsibilities: for first enquirers and practical mainstream types it can make the preparations available with clear instructions for how they can be used. Results from other growers would be made readily available so that such folk can know what to expect and/or under what circumstances to apply the preparations. At the same time the BDA would nurture the anthroposophical foundations of the preparations to the extent that the curiosity and experimentation of its in-house or partnered researchers would bring theory and practice into a mutually reinforcing creativity, ready to deal with new eventualities such as CCD, BSE, GM, DDT, 5G, radioactivity and other post-1924 challenges. It would be clear when to give "just do this" instructions, and when to invite people in to the esoteric background to which their curiosity will draw them. It will recognise the *show me* types from the *explain to me* types from the *intuitive* types and be equipped to offer a range of approaches as much as is feasible. It will be confident in the relations between the farm organism, the calendar work and the preparation work, so that these elements work together towards the same goal. It will not lose sight of the goal - the healing of the earth - and if the promotion of biodynamics serves that goal then great, but the Association would be aware that self-promotion is not the goal itself.

The association would be the Ego ensuring that the inner- and outer-orientated are seamlessly conjoined, and take responsibility for the whole picture, being active when one or other aspect is out of balance, out of touch, or either are lacking in oomph.

It will recognise that all this is a truly demanding task, especially given the prevailing momentum and the convictions of those running the mainstream show, so it will remember to make time for forgiveness as it resolves to keep up the work in the face of all these challenges.



What is 'organic agriculture'?

John Paull has found the first written use of the phrase *organic farming*, and Lord Northbourne¹⁹ has been credited with this coinage as a result. If John Paull has faithfully traced the trail back to Northbourne's phrase, then credit lies with biodynamics as presented by Pfeiffer in so far as the concept of the Farm Organism informed Northbourne's language. Whether it is meaningful to ascribe this neologism to one person amongst a cohort of fellow-travellers²⁰ is, perhaps, a secondary question to: 'What is presently understood by 'organic'?'

To a chemist, 'organic' specifies the field of carbon chemistry and so *organic farming* is a limited chemical-material concern manifesting as a farming which will address problems through material or chemical remedies because all issues are viewed, in the final analysis, as chemical problems.

One kind of organic farmer obeys the certification criteria which requires these physical-chemical inputs to the farm to be from something that was identifiably alive in the recent past – manure, compost and so forth. To this farmer the only realignment from the chemical farmer is the recent life-history of the source of the necessary nutrients.

Another organic farmer would attempt to find these recently-alive nutrients from within a cycle under their control. This organic farmer would realise that any undesigned output from a farm is pollution and all undesigned input to a farm is expense and that these two loose ends could be connected to form a virtuous loop. On such a farm, manure and other 'waste materials' don't leach away to stream and water-table but are husbanded to be the core of the fertility of the land, reducing bought-in materials towards zero.

Whilst willingly incorporating the undoubted achievements of this third farmer, a fundamental paradigm shift is required to weave together the thoughts in a fully aware biodynamic practice. One steps away from the certainties of mainstream culture²¹ to entertain the possibility that life is not something emerging from the physical body of a creature, but is something that trumps the sovereignty of the rules proper to the matter of the mineral world.²² Steiner attempted to show how a person can appreciate the overlooked invisible realities without logical contradiction. This involved recognising the assumptions of Kant, Bacon and Descartes inherent in our education and reassessing the situation. Done successfully, so Steiner asserts, one can develop 'a science that understands itself.' If Dr Steiner made a good job of this recasting of knowledge, this meant putting life back into the living, the psyche back into psychology, and a free being back into the moral order of the world. This makes demands on people to employ increasing precision and clarity both in external investigation and self-reflection, and then to weave together these two experiences back into the full and - now - consciously apprehended reality, to know it for the first time²³.

Since our modern science has tied its ship to the (oxymoronic) ideal of objectivity, it is wary of allowing any (other) subjective experiences back into the fold. Although rarely stated, its manifest assumption is that it must press on with its own project rather than allow contamination from other approaches. This boils down to confidence that *physics* has the ultimate answer to all life's enigmas. Dr Steiner challenged that this is ever going to reveal the mysteries of what is alive. He wrote about what an *organics* might be like in 1886 and he framed it in direct comparison to *physics*.

¹⁹ Philip Conford reckons that Lord Northbourne denied that this was his neologism.

²⁰ See Dan McKinan p 39 at seq headed "The other Sources of Organic Agriculture".

²¹ "...under the influence of our modern philosophy of materialism, it is agriculture - believe it or not - that has deviated furthest from any truly rational principles..." [Dr Steiner to the members](#)

²² The laws of Newton's thermodynamics are superb for mechanisms, but are insufficient to explain a thistle or a chicken. A thorough familiarity with acetylcholine and DNA cannot encompass a farmer.

²³ "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." TS Elliot – Little Gidding

At the end of the eighteenth century the universally prevailing view was that there was no science to explain living phenomena in the sense in which physics, for example, is a science that explains things. Kant, in fact, tried to establish a philosophical basis for this view.

Above all, one has committed a serious error in this. One believed that the method of inorganic science should simply be taken over into the realm of organisms. One considered the method employed here to be altogether the only scientific one, and thought that for “organics” to be scientifically possible, it would have to be so in exactly the same sense in which physics is, for example.

'A Theory of Knowledge Inherent in Goethe's World View' Chapter: *Organic Nature*

A biodynamic farmer could just apply the preparations and husband a farm so it is reasonably self-contained, and we can be grateful that so many have shouldered these already heavy demands. But this could also be the start of a path down which the farmer strives to be fully conscious of what and why such practices are employed. This too would be *organic farming* but how different from our chemist!

This biodynamic farmer would be aware of the inner life of the animals. The form of the plants and animals would be as revelatory as their yield. The work of George Adams, Andreas Suchantke and Jos Verhulst are seminal in this Goethean approach to life and thus to farming. It is one in which the analytical approach (intellect) is healed by the synthetic (reason), and the farm organism can reveal itself.

Could it be that Pfeiffer's inclination to bring the *organische* aspect of BD to the attention of the public has contributed to the atrophy of the energetic or *dynamische* aspect, even in anthroposophical circles?

Whoever actually first coined the phrase 'organic farming' can be pleased with a widely adopted term that is very useful in soft focus. Perhaps it is sufficiently broad to encompass a common approach in the various strands within it and even to represent the outward facing aspects of biodynamic agriculture. Definitive differences are only revealed by the next level of enquiry.

It may not be necessary to understand the full parameters of anthroposophical agriculture to be an excellent farmer. Indeed, history suggests that many have struggled to find intellectual purchase on biodynamics' unique procedures. For that reason, Paul's insightful phrase (that Northbourne's seminal *Life to the Land* was “a secularized British manifesto”) points out that organic farming can be an incomplete appreciation of biodynamic agriculture.

If the outwardly-orientated lobe of the BD lemniscate becomes detached from its reticent twin it will lose its distinctive and important character and become *biologische* – simply organic. It will have lost its deeper insights, its heritage, its potential – its *dynamische* aspect.

One way for *biologische-dynamische* agriculture to lead the way is to show that it can do positive things other agricultural disciplines cannot. It has some things to show after 100 years but it would make a much more persuasive case if there were more.

BD in the UK

In the *Genius Personae* group discussions the subject of the particular nature of the British Isles has arisen at every stage. We have noted that Pfeiffer seems to have made a good connection to Barbara Saunders Davies and visited her in SW Wales every time he came here. He was fascinated by the stone circles to be found in that part of the world and suggested that BD would not find a home here unless it made some connection to the culture responsible for the stones.

The group also noted a line that is marked both geologically and by the first centres of the Ruskin Mill Trust, and we postulated a difference in emphasis in the culture to the North and West compared to that to the East and South of this 'Tees-Exe line'. We spoke of the remnants of the Druidic Celtic culture to the West, and to the East a more roman-influenced flavour. According to Dr Steiner, the Druids of the Hibernian mysteries of the West knew of the Christ before word could have come from the Middle East because their mystery centres avoided decadence into the early Christian era. This original clairvoyance leaves its legacy alongside the attitudes which surround that culture. The East was seen as a home to the triumphs and pitfalls of a more reductionist and intellectual culture, more hierarchical and at ease with

structured society. The more anarchic flat-hierarchical culture predominates in the West. The stones of the Preselli's came across that line to Stonehenge – an eye of yin in the heart of yang perhaps? What are we to make of all these intuitions?

First, I am taking it as read that these are generalisations of the sort that have given Anthroposophy a deal of trouble in recent years. Whether they are actually insightful and helpful is a secret of the future.

Perhaps we don't have to test the thickness of the ice here, but from these intuitions we can take something which is not located in places or categories of person. We can, for instance, reckon with a spectrum of approaches to BD ranging from the feeling-based intuitions to the more logical and materialistic, and from all / any stations in between. The BDA will have to engage with all these approaches whilst still being true to itself. Everyone who has been around BD knows that there are those who relate to the world via the beings of Nature, others whose primary interface is practical, and others who need to have some grasp of the theory in order to be comfortable. In all of these categories there will be some who are happy to accept the authority of a trusted teacher (most commonly Dr Steiner) whilst others will accept nothing unless and until their scepticism is uprooted through their own direct engagement with nature.

Tying this together

... Pfeiffer, being the first generation, was really attempting to get BD on to the Earth, and so he tended to up-play the biological reality, and down-play the energetic reality of all these things - from my impression. And the next generation tended to do the same. People like Keopf in his book, he was really focussing on the [material] scientific realities of Biodynamics and I got to say I feel it's now my generation's task to bring back the knowledge of the energetic realities ... that it's biological forces we're playing with.

[Glen Atkinson](#)

A 26 year-old Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was left holding a precious baby in 1925 conceived in his absence. He raised this child and assimilated it into with the world to be self-reliant. He protected its uniqueness from a world that would not understand. Others, sensing the phenomenal potential, felt the need to protect the child further, and in the UK this was achieved by Lord Northbourne's secularized British disguise which smuggled it through the war. In 1951 Bernard Lievegoed encouraged BD-UK to be itself and reminded the youth of its full esoteric essence. Ever since, the hunger for genuine connection to the spirit has grown in the UK. The need for a true harmony with the real foundations of the world have never been more acute. Dornach cannot resolve its internal contradictions and once again has asked for BD-UK-R&D to assist - and we do have some of the keys.

The BDA has recently added 'research' to its remit but must reinvigorate its research organ and empower it to own its esoteric inheritance if it is to fulfil its brief. This might fulfil the potential of biodynamics from 1924, and perhaps that will bring enough momentum to carry it into the present and, possibly, into the future.