

Agriculture Lecture 3

30 people came to IBIG* at the end of February. I suspect more might have come if the subject matter hadn't been the knotty issue of the 5 chemical elements or siblings which Dr Steiner brings to the fore in the lecture 3 of the Agriculture course. On successive days we considered minerals, plants, and animals to find ways to grasp this elusive subject. I shared some ideas about carbon and hydrogen in relation to the human and delegates seemed interested, but felt they should be written down for clarity and slower digestion. Here goes ...

First, it seems appropriate to put lecture three back into the context of the Agriculture course. Lecture I has a gentle 'prologue' with a great deal of thanks to the hosts and some diverting anecdotes about professor's wives and washing. Then the correspondence of the heavens and plants is mentioned in contrast to the relatively emancipated humans. This correspondence is deepened to the mineral polarity of silica and calcium.

The gloves come off in lecture II. After the ideal farm is characterised as an individuality we hit turbulence as images come thick and fast – inner and outer planets, plants with their heads in the soil, living and dead warmth and air, a teasing cameo appearance from the clay preparation, crystallisation periods of the year, chaotic seed proteins imprinted by the universe, Sunflowers as Jupiter-flowers, round and ramified roots, restraining qualities higher or lower in the plants, knowing what is cosmic or terrestrial, kali yuga and apocalyptic intimations, animals' solar heads and lunar bottoms.

Assuming one's sense of orientation is not terminally confused and that we don't have to overcome chemistry-anxiety from our school lab days, we might feel that we are back on familiar territory as we meet carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen and sulphur. With the sinking sands of the hideously complex lecture II behind us the subject of lecture III can seem like an oasis promising security and time for orientation.

Alternatively we might experience surprise that Dr Steiner deflects from his course of penetration into increasingly arcane cosmic mysteries towards mere matter, indeed, into the epitome of materialism, the lego blocks of which the materialist universe is constructed - the chemical elements. Have we really done all this work to understand hierarchies and successive incarnations of people and planets only to find out that we could have stayed with those chemical elements all along? Could we have spared ourselves the ridicule of our scientifically orthodox friends and neighbours?

If we could have just studied the chemical elements then why is this presentation so confusing? We all know that we are searching for a truly practical spiritual life, but exactly which element does 'carry' the spiritual? One can read that it could be sulphur or carbon, and if I turn to the medical lectures it says that the spiritual proper (the Ego) is carried by hydrogen which merely dissolves forms in the agriculture course. Confusion seems to descend once again. A sense of despair washes over us as we watch the oasis dissolve into a mirage, perhaps leaving us grasping for some comfort in anti-intellectualism ... or ... or we could take a deep breath and try again to sift for some clues that can turn this dark confusion towards crystal clarity.

Temporarily postponing that goal for a necessary detour, I would like to throw in some images and ideas to help us wrestle with this lecture. First, a quote from p19 of the 'Schiller Files' that Henry Goulden (with help from Desmond Cumberland) has recently translated and published.

Willhelm Pelikan - from a conversation with R.S. on 15th March, 1922

I asked him (R.S.) in connection with indications which appear in the lectures under the title 'Spiritual Science and Medicine' where there are described the basic substances which go to form albumin in connection with the organic processes of liver, kidneys, heart, and lungs. Later, similar indications appear in the Agriculture Course.

In connection with my question, Rudolf Steiner made the following suggestions: In connection with the effects of these substances one must distinguish between the upper and lower organisation. The physical body is something which is formed on the basis of the combustion process of carbon. Then one can associate hydrogen with the ego activity. In the head, nerves, sense system on the contrary, one should connect the physical body with the hydrogen, and the ego to the carbon.

I hope this has given an image of the polar nature of Carbon and Hydrogen in relation to warmth so we do not need to argue that one or the other is its carrier. Rather the synthesis needs to be addressed: how is the spirit which manifests through these elements best considered as functioning within a polarity?

UNITY	LIGHT AND DARKNESS	3 PROCESSES	4 ELEMENTS	NEW SYNTHESIS		
<i>OLD INDIAN</i>	<i>OLD PERSIAN</i>	<i>EGYPTO-CHALDEAN</i>	<i>GRECO-ROMAN</i>	<i>EUROPEAN</i>	<i>SLAVIC</i>	<i>AMERICAN</i>
			<i>FIRE ELEMENT (C and H)</i>			
		<i>SULFUR (ANIMAL-HUMAN)</i>		<i>HORN SILICA (501)</i>		
	<i>LIGHT (DIURNAL BEINGS)</i>		<i>AIR ELEMENT (N)</i>		<i>NEW PREP</i>	
<i>WARMTH (IMMATERIAL PHYSICAL MAN)</i>		<i>MERCUR (VEGETABLE-ANIMAL)</i>		<i>COMPOST PREPS (502 → 507)</i>		<i>NEW (IRON)</i>
	<i>DARKNESS (NOCTURNAL BEINGS)</i>		<i>WATER ELEMENT (O)</i>		<i>NEW PREP</i>	
		<i>SAL (VEGETABLE-MINERAL)</i>		<i>HORN MANURE (500)</i>		
			<i>EARTH ELEMENT (C and H)</i>			
Lecture 1 – 'prologue' (?)	Lecture 1	Lecture 2	Lecture 3	Lecture 4 & 5	Lecture 6	Lecture 7 & 8

I can offer another image that I have found very useful in approaching this lecture (and lecture 2 and indeed the whole Agriculture Course). Available in Spanish or Italian there is a 400 page commentary on the agriculture course by Enzo Nastati†. He offers this schema (above) abbreviated and translated for our purposes.

How can we blend these images together to make a serious attempt to understand the third lecture Dr Steiner gave at Koberwitz?

We have found that Doctor Steiner considered Carbon and Hydrogen to work together to carry the warmth of the macrocosm, and we have used Enzo's schema to suggest that the gesture of the whole agriculture course echoes the structure given in the [Outline of Esoteric Science](#), and thus that lecture III corresponds to the Greco-Roman era. In this period Aristotle developed logic and mankind began to reckon the physical universe with the four elements. This indicates an era bound by philosophers and stones.

Is this just word play? Why does Dr Steiner, shockingly, drop the philosophers' stone in here like it is the most obvious fact imaginable? Even if we have only read Harry Potter or laughed at the dubious chemists of the dark ages, we know that this mythical stone was supposed to change lead into gold, or to raise fallen matter into something sublime. We can start with this common appreciation of the stone of the wise and compare it with the ideas of anthroposophy.

At the heart of this era of philosophers and stones we have Golgotha to save us from the twin excesses of ungrounded flights of fancy and spiritless materialism. What does Dr Steiner tell us again and again fulfils the role which is popularly ascribed to the philosopher's stone – of turning darkness to light, evil into good? I suggest this is the human heart that is reinvigorated with the power of Golgotha. Is it legitimate to flip from external material to inner transformations? There is a definition of Alchemy: the art which realises that it is impossible to transform outside of oneself what has not been transformed within.

I think we have a key which is useful beyond word-play and we would do well to see if there is more to support this approach. Whilst spiritual science deals in clear concepts the bible works more in images. A mixture of these images and concepts enables us to consider humanity's trajectory from an original unity with the spiritual world down to material manifoldness. Then Golgotha offers an option of a new unity as an alternative to continued disintegration. Adam and Eve were tempted to push the timetable for integration of the ego into humanity and this initiated what is called the 'fall'. In Lemurian times Adam Kadmon was a citizen of the whole zodiac and he was made of light. Only as the fall proceeded did he gain a material body and thus find that 'he was naked'. A second result was that the tree of life was no longer available to him and he – we – began to experience death. In the [Gospel of Luke](#) lectures Steiner reveals that this meant that not all of the ethers were subject to the fall and the rejuvenating etheric parts were kept unsullied as the tree of life. These unfallen ethers only came to Earth with the Nathan Soul (who last had a 'reflected incarnation' as Krishna in Lemurian times) into the Luke child. In Jesus we find the epitome of humanity in the wisest ego of Zarathustra, the purified astral body of Gautama Buddha and the unsullied etheric body of the Nathan Soul, and into this vessel came the Christ in the Jordan.

When Christ's blood fell to the earth from the cross, death was overcome and on the Saturday Christ joined with the forces of Adam. In the resurrected or phantom body these two were together – and this is why Mary Magdalene did not recognise her friend and called him Rabboni instead of the previous Rabbi.

What has this to do with lecture 3? Trace Adam's trajectory: a form of light becomes physical, and then re-emerges as a body of light. The original insubstantial form becomes darkened with matter and then is raised again as clear but embodied light. This is the transformation of carbon from pre-substantial form into coal, and then on to diamond, transformed by the philosopher's stone. The passage from Jesus to Christ is the passage through the holy nights from Christmas to the baptism and, in many countries, those who were considered not to have acquitted themselves well over these thirteen nights would receive coal in their stockings on January the 6th – at least when parents were more focussed on the eternal soul than on child psychology.

In Italian this is also reflected in the three names of Adam – Ad amore, A morte, and Adamantine – made for love, deathless, and a diamond geezer. (I may have misunderstood that bit!)

So there is some resonance between Anthroposophical history (time) and lecture III (chemistry). Can we find further approaches which are consistent? How about in the embryological replay of our history in the microcosm? Many organs descend in the embryological processes such as the kidneys which began with our embryological ears, and the testicles which descend through the inguinal canals leaving a pathway vulnerable to herniation. From the latter rise the waters which nourish the tree of life – semen. From the pituitary descends the river which nourishes the tree of knowledge – the cerebro-spinal fluid. These rivers meet in the heart. We find echos of this awareness in the naming of the 'temples' and the 'sacrum'. Even the word 'perineum' means *near the temple*.

The temples of the Greeks and the cloisters up to the 17th century were built upon this model. This archetype can help us understand a bit more about the sisters. The fourfold Greek elements provide the corners of the cloisters. If the cloister corridors are walked in one direction one follows the path of incarnation from warmth to air to water to earth. The opposite journey is one of resurrection. One can enter the central garden from any side and this is the area of the Sun, the sol-ferro or sulphur, the common link between all levels of the supersensible and the material. A similar knowledge was with the Egyptian pyramid builders who used the same cloister archetype in three dimensions. In this case the sulphur was the golden statue at the pinnacle of the pyramid.

If we take these ideas and re-read lecture III I hope that we might begin to penetrate and transform its opacity. Some of these ideas - and more - are elucidated in detail in Enzo Nastati's commentary†. I am in the process of translating this into English but this labour of love needs financing if we are to have it ready in time for next years Dornach course which is to do with the Koberwitz course. If anyone can help with translation (from Spanish or Italian) or with money to finance the translators please do get in touch with mark@considera.org .

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This was written for the Star and Furrow magazine.

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*IBIG – was the International Biodynamic Initiative Group

† Enzo Nastati's book has been [available for many years now in English](#), although Enzo updates his work constantly: see [his youtube version](#) started in 2021.