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**Biodynamic Wine-crafting in Switzerland:  
The Translation and Adaptation of Rudolf Steiner's  
Cosmology into *Dark Green Agronomies***

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**Abstract**

Over the past two decades, Swiss wine-crafting professionals (*vignerons*) have increasingly turned their attention toward a 'holistic' and ecosystemic understanding of their vineyards. Among them, a growing professional segment has engaged in an esoteric agronomy inspired by Rudolf Steiner: Biodynamics. This approach is illustrative of Bron Taylor's *dark green religion* applied to agronomy. This ethnographic study describes and analyzes how Swiss *vignerons* translate and adapt the legacy of Steiner in their everyday lives. After detailing how practitioners frame their engagement in this agronomy, the author distinguishes two processes in the translation and adaptation of Rudolf Steiner's insights: (a) *secularization*, which bridges the guidelines of biodynamics and common secular *naturalistic* ideas; and (b) *spiritualization*, which relies on *supernaturalistic* conceptions in line with 'expressive selfhood' and the quest for well-being. The author argues that these two processes do not stand in mutual opposition, but rather have been intertwined in Euro-American modernities.

**Keywords**

Biodynamics, Anthroposophy, wine-crafting, Switzerland, lived religion, dark green religion, agronomy, naturalism, supernaturalism

*Introduction: The Translation and Adaptation  
of Rudolf Steiner's Cosmology*

At 4:30 am on a brisk morning in May 2017, I embarked on my first day of fieldwork in the Swiss vineyards. The night before, I received an enigmatic message: 'Alex, you can come tomorrow, we are dynamizing. You are welcome' (Vaud 10.5.2017). My interlocutor is a vigneron based in the Lemanic Region between Lausanne and Geneva. He had responded affirmatively to my request to spend the day with him and to have him introduce me to the important features of an alternative agronomy called biodynamics, which is part of the 'organic' farming movement (Barton 2018). In preparing myself for the first day of fieldwork, I read that this agronomy derives from the esoteric cosmology of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy, a 'spiritual questing' movement that emerged in twentieth-century Europe, in part from the Anglo-Saxon Theosophy movement and other Romantic metaphysical traditions (Campbell 2007: 157-59; Hanegraaff 2017). I also read that through biodynamics, practitioners become familiarized with alternative views and knowledge about humans, animals, and vegetal growth that challenge mainstream and so-called 'materialistic' agronomical approaches (Compagnone et al. 2016).

Rudolf Steiner conceives 'nature' as a 'living organism' of which one can become intimately aware through the development of a 'living thought' (Hammer 2001: 419-26; Choné 2013). Following Goethe's phenomenological work on plant archetypes and growth, Steiner depicts this process as acted upon by earthly and cosmic 'forces' and 'influences'. The art of biodynamics consists in learning to work with these forces in order to strive for the physical and spiritual health of a farm. As noted by Nadia Breda (2016), biodynamics promotes an *analogical* ontology, based on resemblance relations, as well as an emphasis on practitioners' self-experimentation.<sup>1</sup> At a practical level, this framework shares common features with bio-organic agronomies. It suggests encouraging biodiversity and avoiding any kind of agrochemistry by treating one's vineyard with 'organic' solutions, such as plant decoctions or sulfur and copper, as well as paying attention to the lunar calendar.

On my first day in the field, however, the vigneron did not explain the overall cosmology of Rudolf Steiner's underlying biodynamics. He showed me how he pragmatically adapted and translated Steiner's esoteric thought in the everyday agronomical practices he and his

1. She refers in particular to Philippe Descola's well-known system of four ontologies: *animism*, *totemism*, *analogism*, and *naturalism* (2005).

employees would purposely apply. In what follows, my intention is not to describe 'biodynamics', understood here as the cosmological and textual references attributed to Steiner, but rather 'biodynamic wine-crafting', which can be defined following Bron Taylor's seminal work, *Dark Green Religion* (2010), as an applied *dark green agronomy* aimed at biodiversity conservation through references to a 'nature' principle. In other words, if I locate my work at the crossroads of the religion and ecology nexus and the emergent field of 'esotericism studies', I do not do so based on its historical or philological premises (von Stuckrad 2008; Hanegraaff 2012). Indeed, the ethnographic and sociological lens of the contemporary and 'lived' phenomenon of esotericism (Granholm 2011; Crockford and Asprem 2018) is more in line with my project of documenting transformations of esotericism in late modernity.

In the Swiss context, and especially in a profession that has been highly secularized by the 'green revolution' starting in the 1940s and affecting worldwide agriculture and peasantry, the growing engagement of vigneronns with biodynamics is intriguing. Like the 'organic' farming movement, biodynamic vigneronns generally represent 'nature' as a 'harmonious', 'balanced', and mostly 'self-resilient' entity (LeVasseur 2017: 27-28). Yet they also express new lifestyles, social practices, and cultural artefacts through an emic use of the term 'spirituality' (Huss 2014: 51). I will argue that it is through bringing Steiner's legacy together with secular *naturalistic* knowledge, as well as drawing upon contemporary and polysemous 'spiritual' registers (Ammerman 2013), that vigneronns constitute the intelligibility of their practices for self and others.

This contribution analyzes empirical observations and statistical data on the rise of biodynamic wine-crafting in Switzerland. It also elucidates the esoteric backdrop of biodynamics in order to highlight how vigneronns engage in processes of adaptation and translation. By way of conclusion, I will argue that *secular* and *spiritual* adaptations of biodynamics are not necessarily opposed.

### *The Changing Religious Landscapes: Biodynamic Wine-crafting and 'Holistic' Spiritualities in Switzerland*

When I arrive at the vineyard, I am warmly greeted by my informant, who explains that he woke up at 3:00 am and had already started 'dynamizing', one of the features that distinguishes biodynamics from 'standard' bio-organic farming. He shows me his installation which is hidden behind two cases of empty bottles: one tank is filled with rainwater and is being heated to 37°C and another is activated by a machine (a 'dynamizer'), which automatically generates whirlpools prior

to breaking them with a reverse movement. The vigneron explains that it is generating 'order' and 'disorder', which he then reframes as 'logos' and 'chaos', categories he uses to describe the macro-structure of the cosmos at a micro level. The vigneron defines his work as doing 'cosmetics' with plants and mentions that giving them form involves the influence of the entire cosmos. Although he was inspired by the writings of Rudolf Steiner, he remains distant from the Anthroposophical Movement, which he considers to be too dogmatic. Instead, he frames his approach as 'experimental' and 'grounded', based on developed 'sensory skills' (Ingold 2000).

The vigneron also explains his approach by emphasizing the importance his 'state of mind' and the inner disposition he projects on plants with his daily intervention. He also told me that he practices daily meditations to 'clear his mind' according to the anthroposophical's meditating tradition (Hammer 2001: 22-25). For my informant, political ecological movements have failed to recognize that the aesthetic dimension is primordial; human environmental agency is about the quest for 'beauty', 'excellence', and 'harmony'. Following a storyline similar to the 'slow food movement' launched in Italy by Carlo Petrini, the vigneron asserts that by recognizing that food and beverages have to be 'good, clean, and fair', citizens will care and act more politically, economically, and socially regarding the sustainability and the socio-environmental impacts of human consumption (Petrini 2013).<sup>2</sup> I consider this vigneron to be an example of a two-fold process: the changing viticultural landscape and the changing religious landscape, which I will detail in the following two subsections.

### *The Changing Landscape of Vineyards: Toward an 'Organic' Turn*

This vigneron was the first encounter I had during the fieldwork I conducted between 2017 and 2020 in four Swiss cantons (Vaud, Valais, Neuchâtel, and Jura). The cantons were selected because they share a francophone culture, though they have their idiosyncracies particularly in regard to their wine histories and cultures, as well as their political and religious profiles.<sup>3</sup> During my fieldwork, I interviewed and carried

2. The Slow Food movement is a form of 'food activism' which demands for alternative and re-localized means of production and consumption.

3. For instance, Neuchâtel follows the French principle of *laïcité*, thus keeping a tight separation between state and religion, as the canton of Vaud officially recognizes the Protestant and Catholic cantonal churches. Although the canton of Valais officially recognizes both churches, it is more closely bound socially to its Catholicism. In Neuchâtel and Vaud, religious and spiritual diversities are more highly regarded than

out participant observation in forty wine-crafting domains, all working within the guidelines of biodynamics, as well as generally seeking other pragmatic solutions within 'holistic' therapeutic approaches. The sample was limited to 40 wine-crafting domains for practical considerations, as the number of certifications of the Demeter label for biodynamic products has expanded rapidly. In this sense, Switzerland follows growing trends that have also been observed in France, where more than 400 domains are currently certified by Demeter (Foyer 2018: 290). Indeed, while only three Swiss wine-crafting domains had a certification in 1997, the number rose to 47 in 2016.<sup>4</sup> Fourteen domains completed the entire certification cursus by the end of 2019, thus resulting in 61 wine-crafting domains overall.<sup>5</sup>

When viewed against the backdrop of the conjoined history of bio-organic and biodynamic agronomies (McKanan 2018; Besson 2011; Alföldi and Nowack 2014), the expansion of wine-crafting domains certified by Demeter is connected to a wider trend toward bio-organic agronomies. The Demeter label and the BioSwiss label for bio-organic products collaborate in sponsoring training workshops and in their political advocacy. Furthermore, being certified in biodynamic products automatically gives the vigneron access to bio-organic certification. The certifications for bio-organic products follow the same pattern of expansion and currently encompass more than 230 wine-crafting domains (BioSuisse 2018). With regard to the roughly 5000 wine-crafting domains in Switzerland (OFAG 2016: 7), bio-organic and biodynamic wine-crafting remain marginal, although they have recently gained great visibility and legitimacy in public debates and polling initiatives.<sup>6</sup> In the wine milieu, renowned and influential wine rankings such as Parker's ranking have propelled emblematic Swiss wine domains into the prestigious zone of 90 points and above, thereby giving more legitimacy to biodynamics.

This statistical fact, based on the official data provided by the institutions which issue the certification labels, is, however, only the 'visible' part of the phenomenon. Through fieldwork and thanks to serendipity, I have continued to discover wine-crafting domains that are partially or

in Valais where the Catholic tradition still has a strong influence on political and quotidian life.

4. Email exchange with the Demeter certification office (25 May 2017).

5. Email exchange with the Demeter certification office (30 January 2020).

6. In the Swiss political system, the population is called upon three or four times a year to vote on citizen-based initiatives. Starting in 2015, ecological concerns such as the abandonment of nuclear power plants (2016) or food sovereignty (2017) have been submitted to vote. Two citizen-based initiatives on the stricter regulation of pesticides and antibiotics will also be subject to referendum in 2021.

fully involved in biodynamic agronomies. The vigneron working within these domains generally do not solicit Demeter certifications, as many are ineligible for certification or do not wish to be officially associated with biodynamic wine-crafting for economic, religious, and/or bureaucratic reasons. Most of the vigneron in these domains seemed to distance themselves from Anthroposophy as none claimed to belong formally to this movement. In some cases, I observed that, whether their wines were certified or not, these vigneron also engaged with practices and worldviews inspired by neo-shamanism or worked with telluric forces and energetic crystals as promoted by local geobiologists. These 'out of scope' domains are usually certified solely according to the standard bio-organic approach (BioSwiss) or remain in state-funded environmental programs known as 'integrated production' schemes. Ethnography thus helps to shed light on the 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1992) of the current agroecological process which is taking place in Swiss vineyards. It enables us to see how what might appear to be an 'organic turn'—growing holistic and ecosystemic comprehension—should be understood as an unstable and dynamic social process.

*The Changing Religious Landscape: Toward a 'Subjective' Turn*

Considering the aforementioned data and field observations, we may conclude that a 'spiritualization' process is—visibly and invisibly—taking place in the Swiss vineyards. Moreover, it appears to be taking place alongside rising ecological awareness among the Swiss population (Becci et al., this issue). One observes that 'holistic', 'subjectivized', and relational approaches, understood here as 'spiritual', are becoming increasingly popular. Heelas et al. (2005) identify a comparable 'spiritual revolution' in Kendal (England). Their use of this term implies that individuals are distancing themselves from congregational norms and privileging a 'subjective turn' involving the search for an 'authentic self' (Lindholm 2002). Yet some questioned this thesis (for instance Bruce 2017). Generally speaking, diverse alternative forms of religiosity are gaining ground in Western Europe and North America (see Zinnbauer et al. 1997; Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas 2009; Stolz et al. 2015). References to religion and spirituality are becoming 'popularized' (Knoblauch 2008, 2014) and entering into mainstream popular culture (e.g., Hollywood movies and music bands). It is thus not surprising that spiritual and religious references are also found in agricultural approaches such as biodynamics, in many instances under new guises.

Following Fedele and Knibbe (2013), these alternative religious profiles may be termed 'contemporary spirituality movements', which avoids the more common but problematic term 'New Age' (see Sutcliffe and Gilhus

2013). Changing terms, however, does not change the fact that studying these forms of less institutionalized religiosity presents strong methodological and epistemological constraints for critical and reflexive social scientific approaches to formally delineating them. Indeed, as pointed out by Ammerman (2013) and Eisenmann et al. (2016), distinct emic uses of ‘spirituality’ form different ‘cultural packages’. Such terms are polysemous and are used differently by disparate social actors from diverse national, regional, linguistic, religious, and class-based contexts. As noted by Peter van der Veer, ‘while the concept [of spirituality] travels globally, its trajectory differs from place to place, as it is inserted in different historical developments’ (2009: 1097). Given the glocal aspects of ‘spirituality’, it is critical to be attentive to local contexts, situated interactional networks, and actors’ self-definitions so as to comprehend how social categories ‘travel’.

In Switzerland, the religious landscape follows general Western European trends (Monnot and Stolz 2018). In particular, Stolz et al. (2016) have identified four profiles of (un)religiosity as applying to the Swiss case: institutional, alternative, distanced, and secular. They estimate that nearly one third of the Swiss population is involved in alternative forms of religiosity, especially via ‘holistic’ therapeutic approaches. This calculation is similar to what Thomas, Nicholl, and Coleman (2001) found fifteen years earlier in Great Britain. The case of biodynamic wine-crafting is particularly interesting insofar as it draws from Anthroposophy to promote a ‘spiritual scientific’ worldview that corresponds to an early twentieth-century European—and especially German-Romantic—ethos (Campbell 2007: 157-59). Biodynamics is currently understood within new social framings of what ‘spirituality’ entails, most notably this-worldliness, self-expression, and wellness (Sointu and Woodhead 2008). Interestingly, changes in the Swiss religious landscape also contribute—alongside other ‘organic’ ecological preoccupations—to transforming the configuration of vineyards.

### *Biodynamic Agriculture: From Cosmology to Practitioners*

Anthroposophy is known as a dissident branch of the wider Theosophical Movement that stands for the ‘easternization’ of the esoteric and spiritual traditions of the late nineteenth century (Choné 2013; Campbell 2007). Following European folklore, as well as Christian esoteric traditions inspired by alchemy, Paracelsianism, and Goethe’s phenomenological approach to the study of the vegetal world, Rudolf Steiner elaborated a complex cosmogony and cosmology explaining the

'spiritual evolution' of plants, animals, and humankind.<sup>7</sup> He grounded his idea of 'spiritual evolution' in Ernst Haeckel's theory of 'biogenetic laws', which states that embryos display all the evolutionary states of their respective species (Choné 2013: 16). Steiner nonetheless considered Haeckel's approach—as well as dominant scientific approaches—as too materialistic and reductionist. He contrasted them with what he termed a 'spiritual science' (*Geistwissenschaft*) that may be summed up as follows: in addition to rational capacities, the 'human being needs to develop new organs or tools of perception which would enable him to open the doors of a suprasensitive world' (Choné 2013: 19, my translation). As shown by recent discussions of the first issue of the critical edition of Rudolf Steiner's work (for instance Wood 2015; Staudenmaier 2015), it is a highly sensitive task to sum up Anthroposophy and Steiner's occult philosophy, as they have been changing over time and are currently undergoing additional hermeneutic reframings.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, I shall limit my analysis to Steiner's engagement with agriculturally related topics. After briefly explaining the core issues of biodynamics, I will examine what it means to formally 'belong' to, and 'believe' in, Anthroposophy, as well as the sources of the movement's proliferation. This will enable me to explain why the *adaptation* and *translation* of Steiner's cosmology are such an important feature to study from a practitioner-based and empirical research perspective.

### *The Origins of Biodynamics*

Steiner's engagement with agriculture occurred toward the end of his life. In 1924, one year before his passing, he gave eight conference papers in Koberwitz, now located in Poland. The transcription of these presentations is known as the *Agriculture Course* and comprises the theoretical basis for biodynamic agronomies. Most of the vigneronns I encountered had read or had started reading this text. Yet, most of them confessed 'having understood only ten percent of it' and resorted to alternative

7. Inspired by the figure of the Swiss alchemist Paracelsus (1493–1541), the Western esoteric tradition has developed the idea of a correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm (Faivre 1996). Authors such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe fostered these traditions by conceiving nature, especially plants, as being more than material. What is known as Goethe's *Naturphilosophie* stresses the phenomenological aspects of plant transformation. The vegetal is conceptualized as an ensemble and a context that may be grasped by the subjective (super)sensitivity of the observer (Choné 2013: 19–21).

8. See Helmut Zander's most recent book (2019) for further insights. Non-German-speaking readers may consult Dan McKanan (2018) for a broad and critical understanding of Anthroposophy in English.

agronomic experts in order to comprehend the more technical elements when undergoing training for their so-called 'reconversions'. Indeed, the *Agriculture Course* is hardly comprehensible without some previous knowledge of modern and contemporary movements that are usually related to 'esotericism' and a general exegesis of Rudolf Steiner's worldview.<sup>9</sup> According to Steiner, 'nature' is a 'living organism' (Choné 2013: 15) to be studied using methods akin to the experimental framework of 'conventional' science.

In Steiner's worldview, there is a continuum between the sensitive world (the material) and the supersensitive world, which is connected with the realm of the spirit (understood in relation to the German notion of *Geist*) and with earthly and cosmological 'forces' and 'influences'. A self-defined 'clairvoyant', Steiner claimed access to the supersensitive realm. In the *Agriculture Course* he depicted alchemical substances such as carbon, nitrogen, and silica as having personalities as well as affinities with either earthly or cosmological 'forces' that are embodied by planets. These 'forces' are usually labeled 'ahrimanian' or 'luciferian' in anthroposophical jargon (see Brendbekken 2002). In contrast to the modernization and industrialization processes in agriculture, Steiner promoted an organicist understanding of the agricultural domain. In his view, a farm should be a self-sufficient 'individual' in which soil composition, plants, animals, and practitioners are conceived as a whole, interconnected with the Earth and other planets in the solar system that mutually influence one another (Steiner 2006 [1924]: 47-51). Interestingly, Steiner also promotes a so-called 'syncretism' between peasant wisdom, such as that found in almanacs and grimoires, and other periscientific knowledge like homeopathy, on the one hand, and more 'conventional' scientific agronomical considerations of manure and fertilizers, on the other (Foyer 2018). This 'assemblage' fosters a certain familiarity for Swiss vigneron, who often refer to it during interviews as just another word for what the Ancients used to do.

It is also in the *Agriculture Course* that 'biodynamic preparations' are first theoretically explained. This idea is often assumed to be Steiner's original input into biodynamics. It refers to different preparations

9. Along with Kocku von Stuckrad (2008), I conceptualize 'esotericism' as embedded in the socio-cultural dynamics it discloses. From an empirical perspective, this term is used by social actors such as biodynamic vigneron to defend themselves against being perceived as 'esoteric'. In this sense, the term illustrates how 'the problems addressed by esotericism research relate to basic aspects of Western self-understanding: how do we explain the rhetoric of rationality, science, enlightenment, progress and absolute truth in their relation to religious claims?' (von Stuckrad 2008: 232).

currently known as the '500'; they range from '500' to '507'. The first two preparations—the '500' and the '501'—are the most common and socially accepted. They feature either cow manure or crushed quartz (silica), which are inserted into cow horns and then buried for six months for fermentation. These two preparations are complementary, enacting either earthly 'ahrimanian' or cosmic 'luciferian' forces, and therefore they cannot be used in isolation. The preparations ranging from the '503' to the '507' are part of the preparations used for biodynamic composting practices. They are an assemblage of vegetal elements such as dried yarrow or dandelion inserted into animal matter (e.g., cow's viscera or the skulls of domestic animals). These preparations are also buried for six months under certain atmospheric and ritual conditions, according to an astrological calendar. They are then stored in specific wooden boxes. The '500' and the '501', and a variation known as the '500P', are used at least once a year for 'dynamizing'.

This is what the vigneron taught me to do on my first day of fieldwork. Apart from the 'exotic' aspects of biodynamic preparations, vignerons often explain their appeal by citing their utility for promoting self-autonomy, much like notions of 'do-it-yourself' or 'low-tech'. They also relate these preparations to agricultural practices that existed prior to the industrialization and mechanization of the Swiss vineyards starting in the 1950s.

### *The Domestication of Biodynamics*

In this contribution I am less concerned with Steiner's metaphysical considerations than with current adaptations and translations of his complex cosmology (McKanan 2018: 7), such as those found in the pedagogy of the Waldorf schools, in naturopathy with brands of body lotions such as Weleda, and in agriculture, with the development of the biodynamic approach regulated by the international Demeter certification label. In regard to the 'popularization' trends (Knoblauch 2008, 2014) detailed in the previous section, non-Anthroposophists have also laid claim to these approaches. They have hence fostered Anthroposophy as a 'lifestyle' rather than a form of institutional belonging to the Anthroposophical Society, whose headquarters (the Goetheanum) is based in Dornach, near Basel. The tension between 'believing' and 'belonging' (Davie 1990) is extremely strong and speaks to diverging logics of 'place-making' and 'place-seeking' (Becci, Burchardt, and Giorda 2017) that apply to anthroposophical institutions and to practitioners of its applied cosmology.

On the one hand, anthroposophical stakeholders are still grounding their framing of biodynamics in Steiner's and anthroposophical legacy.

This is well illustrated in a book edited by Jean-Michel Florin, the current director of the agricultural section of the Goetheanum, on wine-crafting (Florin 2017). In this publication, pragmatic know-how is assembled with mythological exegesis of the divine figure of Dionysus and comments on Goethe's approach to plant growth. On the other hand, Swiss vigneron first called upon alternative agronomical engineers—who were instructed practitioners of biodynamics—for training. Although the pioneering figure of biodynamic wine-crafting in Switzerland was a self-declared Anthroposophist who began practicing in the 1970s, nowadays vigneron prefer to call themselves 'biodynamists' or to mention that they cultivate grapes following 'biodynamic methods', in order to create distance from Anthroposophy. For instance, vigneron's comprehension of biodynamics is, as I will elaborate in greater detail, related less to an 'orthodox' reading of Rudolf Steiner's thought than to a pragmatic quest for alternative resources for the conservation of biodiversity or to a 'caring' attitude toward plants and soils. However, the cosmology of biodynamics is hardly disconnected from its agronomical practices. Thus, discourses on 'forces' and 'influences', as well as exotic practices such as the 'dynamization' of biodynamic preparations, must be 'domesticated' as any exoticized social object so as to neutralize their 'uncanny aspects' (Altglas 2014: 315).

As with Véronique Altglas's observations regarding 'bricolage' and 'exoticism', I found that vigneron engaged in biodynamics not only by learning practices or developing sensory and emotional awareness, but also by lending intelligibility and order to the meaning of their actions, and to their underlying ethics and worldview. The use of the term 'reconversion' by Swiss vigneron and certification labels to describe engagement in bio-organic techniques and biodynamics is emblematic of this process. The notion of reconversion is not only religiously loaded, but also expresses a return to an original state of affairs that existed prior to the 'green revolution'. This is similar to other types of 're-traditionalization' involving nostalgia for idealized and selective 'good old times' (Lenclud 1987). As Tanya Luhrmann notes, however:

Conversion is a complex process and above all else a learning process. Converts do not make the transition from nonbeliever to believer simply by speaking—by acquiring new concepts and words. They must come to believe emotionally that those new concepts and words are true. (Luhrmann 2008: 519)

In a sense, biodynamic vigneron are constantly engaged with the needs of translating and adapting their daily agronomical practices in accordance with the imperatives of a 'secular order' and the contemporary wine industry. Apart from anthroposophical stakeholders, other

actors from different religious and spiritual movements come into play as well by providing alternative ways to comprehend vineyards and wines as sentient beings. This is evident in the narrations of vigneron's 'reconversion' process and in how the principles structuring their agronomies are socially 'framed', and hence articulated within contemporary social intelligibilities (Goffman 1974).

*'Reconverting' to Biodynamics:*

*The Translation and Adaptation of Steiner's Cosmological Legacy*

The majority of the wine-crafting domains I visited are between two and twenty hectares in size and are managed by a family and a few employees. Most are owned by independent vigneron with strong socio-cultural capital.<sup>10</sup> In rare cases, they are owned by municipalities or cantons. While the structuration of the wine domains engaged in biodynamic agronomies is rather similar, the life trajectories of the vigneron show greater variety. Most vigneron are 'heirs' who went straight to local schools of oenology and viticulture, while others had previous experience in the scientific, cultural, or economic realms before transitioning or returning to wine-crafting when they got older. The vigneron I encountered were all between 30 and 70 years old. While the majority of vigneron are men, renowned and iconic women are engaged in the biodynamic milieu as well, especially in the canton of Valais, including such vigneron as Marie-Thérèse Chappaz, one of the most internationally renowned Swiss vigneron. Chappaz, in turn, has mentored a sizable cohort of up-and-coming biodynamic vigneron, and many of these newcomers are women. For a minority of the vigneron I met, existential ruptures in their lives or particular life trajectories caused them to adopt a 'spiritual' lifestyle and to engage with alternative practices and therapies, such as eastern meditation, reflexology, neo-shamanism, Tantrism, dowsing, and crystal energizing. The diversity of their profiles illustrates the variety of motivations and pathways toward

10. This can be inferred from the numerous cultural references they made during the interviews. Many mentioned the wider agroecological literature, speaking of Fukuoka's non-interventionism, as depicted in the *One-Straw Revolution* (Fukuoka 2009 [1975]), or of having read Goethe. Some mentioned radio and TV programs about systemic environmentalism or 'new physics'. In one case, I spoke to a vigneron, formerly a Protestant chaplain, who presented a systematic theology on pruning following the religious philosophy of Paul Tillich. Often, they were also engaged politically at the municipal level or had their wine associated with renowned chefs. They additionally organized numerous cultural events to promote their wines and local artists.

engaging in biodynamics, as well as the distinct interpretive lenses for making sense of the 'efficiency' of their practices.

*Narrating 'Reconversion': Family Tradition, the Ethics of Entrepreneurship, and the Quest for Wine Excellence*

In the interviews, vigneronns were asked to narrate their recent agroecological innovations. The purpose of this broad question was to uncover what comprehension they had of biodynamic wine-crafting and what their other inspirations and resources were. These resources could range from *naturalistic* epistemologies provided by agroengineering research centers to more spiritual and cosmological views. One common narrative showed a generational pattern. Parents or grandparents had economically benefited from the modernization of agriculture in the 1950s. Following the emergence of oenological and applied agronomical sciences, new machines and new agrochemical treatment products (mineral fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, and subsequently herbicides) deeply transformed the profession (Nossiter and Beuvelet 2015). Conscious of their position in the current wine-crafting milieu and industry, vigneronns often depicted the following counter-episode as the starting point for their parents and themselves to tackle more quality-orientated, ecological, and ethical concerns in their daily practice:

[In the 1950s] they all followed the great movement of petrochemistry, especially the generation of my grandfather who engaged with it wholeheartedly. Because, at that time, vigneronns earned their living, and it was always about quantity. The guy producing the most was the most successful. (Vaud, 6 July 2017, my translation)

Starting in the 1970s, two new ecological developments occurred in the Swiss vineyards: a bio-organic approach to farming and a state program favoring the reduction of agrochemistry, locally known as integrated production. Interestingly, the Swiss pioneers and promoters of bio-organic products—Hans and Maria Müller—had started to engage with biodynamics back in the 1920s. Yet, the BioSwiss certification institute has sought to narratively distance themselves from these individuals for 'confessional reasons' (Alföldi and Nowack 2014: 4). Bio-organic and integrated production gained public and legal recognition during the same period, and they are both concerned with bringing biodiversity back into the vineyards, in part, by letting grass grow between the rows of vines. However, the bio-organic approach has stricter specifications, including a radical abandonment of the use of agrochemistry in favor of organic solutions (e.g., '*bouillie bordelaise*', sulfur, and copper, or working with 'auxiliary' species such as the ladybird beetle).

This historical and generational relation to the first ecologization processes of the 1970s is important, as current vigneron usually conceive their engagement with biodynamics as the next step after prior engagement with integrated and standard bio-organic production. Indeed, their engagement with biodynamics started in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. As detailed by the Demeter certification institute on its website, biodynamics is commonly presented as being 'organic and more'. The qualification 'and more' is interesting as it refers to aspects of biodynamic farming that practitioners often cite when explaining why they did not remain within standard bio-organic frameworks. In particular, they emphasize being 'stricter about the specification', 'more organic', 'more technically adapted to and probing wine-crafting', 'more holistic', 'more spiritual', and so on.

'Reconverting' to bio-organic and biodynamic production in Switzerland has been understood as part of a 'silent revolution'. Inspired by the observations and conclusions in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) regarding the environmental and health impacts of agrochemical treatment products, vigneron discussed during our interviews the process of becoming aware that these products are harmful to the ecosystem. This awareness can derive from family traditions or be informed by recent political struggles in the media and social networks. It is also based on corporal awareness, such as learning to link symptoms with the use of these products. Skin allergies, headaches, colleagues' illnesses, and loss of vitality in plants and soils are all factors that may derive from the cocktail of molecules being used in agrochemistry. In one dramatic case, the owner of a wine-crafting domain 'reconverted' to biodynamics after two of his employees developed cancer and died. His decision to follow the new agronomical trend was also informed by the interest of the remaining crop-manager in biodynamics and an interest among other vigneron in the village in collaborating.

Other understandings of agrochemical products can also be found at the affective level. For instance, the use of these products was viscerally perceived as 'injuring' nature. The remarks of a vigneron who had ceased using these products in 2000 and decided to 'reconvert' in 2014 illustrate the emotional dimensions of this process:

I know very well that all my colleagues don't care most of the time. The Portuguese are the ones spreading the herbicides.<sup>11</sup> But when my colleagues also spread these products, their lifesblood is in their land. So,

11. Some of the untrained workforce in the vineyards are from Portugal or former Yugoslavia. Most of them arrived through successive waves of migration and others through seasonal workers' networks.

each time they go about with these machines, I know their hearts are soaring. Each time they spray herbicides on the ground, I know their little hearts are soaring. Because mine would do exactly the same. (Vaud, 6 September 2017, my translation)

The environmental and health aspects of biodynamic farming are some of the main advantages invoked by biodynamic vigneron. Yet variations of this narration often stood out in what the vigneron said. Some pointed out that biodynamic agronomies had affinities with a specific 'nature spirituality' (Hedlund-de Witt 2011) they had developed prior to their 'reconversion':

I do not reckon it to be esoteric. Well, for me I am speaking to plants, but to me it has nothing to do with esotericism. Rather, every time I see a plant and it looks sick, I am asking her,<sup>12</sup> 'How are you?' [...] I am connecting it to biodynamics because it suits me, but I already used to do it before [engaging in biodynamics]. (Neuchâtel, 20 June 2017, my translation)

Others situated biodynamics in relation to ethical entrepreneurship. For the vigneron who claimed this narrative, care for the people goes hand in hand with care for the environment and must be implemented at every level of the domain:

For me, the bigger aspect of it is the labor on the soil—how you work the soil, ecologically. But also how you treat your collaborators, how you treat your grape providers. It is not a Steinerian spirit. It is a human spirit, I think. (Valais, 17 October 2017, my translation)

Finally, another common narrative of 'reconversion' gives legitimacy to biodynamic wine-crafting by relating it directly to oenological considerations. Ontological entities such as 'terroir'—e.g. the subtle conjunction of soil composition, grape variety, climate, and the vigneron's know-how—is often invoked with regard to the more technical aspects of the method (Demossier 2011; Teil, Grant, and Grant 2012). Indeed, for vigneron seeking 'naturalness' or 'rawness' in grape harvesting, avoiding any so-called chemical 'artifice' is connected to the idea of allowing a genuine 'expression' of the land to communicate itself directly through their wines. Plants and practitioners are thus only the 'revelators' of a certain ontological yet material entity that consists of the numerous geological layers composing a vineyard's soil (Salisbury 2012). By reclaiming the terroir and emblematic grape variety, this justification is often found among prestigious wine domains in Switzerland. For example, in one area the vigneron explained to me that the Chasselas (a local grape variety) was the result of a long co-evolution of the plant and

12. In French, 'plant' is grammatically feminine.

the inhabitants of the canton of Vaud. He added with a hint of humor and semi-seriousness: 'I don't know which shaped the other with their bitter yet tonic temperament' (Vaud, 20 October 2017). Another prestigious vigneron who was more pragmatic and less into identity politics explained that biodynamics was part of a method to 'design' the taste of wines:

We want to make wines that are more mineral. We want to save a grape variety called the Chasselas, which is rather sweet, and we want to give it back some bitterness. We want to give it back some minerality. We want to give it back some class. So we are using biodynamics, but it is only one means among others. (Vaud, 16 October 2017, my translation)

All these illustrations point to the *adaptation* of biodynamics that have the effect of distancing it from its anthroposophical foundation. During my fieldwork, I often heard phrases such as 'I do not reckon it to be esoteric', 'it is not a Steinerian spirit', and 'it is only one means among others', and the repeated comment that one does not want to become 'an Ayatollah of biodynamics'. They served to counter what might otherwise appear as an excess of spirituality, dogmatism, or fanaticism.

*Framing the Principles:  
Between Secularization and Spiritualization*

As indicated, Swiss vigneron engaged in biodynamic farming frame their 'reconversion' in terms of general ethical, environmental, and health concerns that are becoming increasingly important. Biodynamics is considered as one means to achieve what is thought to be 'balance' and 'harmony' in the vineyards, effectively avoiding grape parasites and diseases, as well as giving full 'expression' to the vigneron's terroirs. Yet, the esoteric background of their practice is inherent in their approach and hardly questioned, not even among biodynamic vigneron themselves. Biodynamic preparations such as the '500' and the '501', as well as the 'dynamizing' process, bear strong metaphysical considerations of 'nature', the 'cosmos', and what can be directly experimented on through the senses. By asking practitioners to explain the principles of effectiveness underlying the biodynamic preparations, religious scholars can grasp how vigneron reinsert their work into the agronomical and spiritual realm, in this case by *translating* and *adapting* Rudolf Steiner's cosmological views by using new language and interpretations.

On the ground, it is possible to distinguish two approaches to framing biodynamics. One *secularizes* the method by relating it to common agronomical knowledge or claiming it to be 'almost scientific' or not yet

‘scientifically proven’ (see Champion 1993). This frame foregrounds the legitimacy of *naturalistic* epistemologies. This entails an attitude of ‘de-cosmologizing’ biodynamic farming by avoiding any explicit reference to anthroposophical jargon such as ‘ahrimanian’ or ‘luciferian’ forces. The other approach to framing *spiritualizes* biodynamics with *supernaturalistic* conceptions of ‘nature’ that diverge somewhat from anthroposophical thought, such as neo-shamanism, geobiology, or transpersonal psychology. This frame also promotes an ‘expressive selfhood’ and the quest for well-being (Sointu and Woodhead 2008), attributed to plants and practitioners alike. Through a rhetoric of self-experimentation and self-validation, biodynamic vigneron also *translate* and *adapt*, at least to a certain extent, Steiner’s legacy and the contemporary exhortation of biodynamic farmers to ‘acknowledge that agriculture is a science of adaptation [and] of individualization of its procedure and methods’ (Masson 2015: 15). This frame ‘re-cosmologizes’ Steiner’s original idea of biodynamics by adding new ‘assemblages’ of which anthroposophical stakeholders do not necessarily approve.

*Secularizing Biodynamics:  
‘Neutralizing’ the Alterity of its Cosmological Backdrop*

Sitting in the customer section of a wine-growing area near Lake Neuchâtel, I noticed a large poster of the vineyard on the wall. On a wooden barrel beside it, cow horns and plant decoctions used in biodynamic treatments were exhibited in glass jars labeled yarrow, willow, horsetail, nettle, etc. This scenery was a reminder for customers of the ‘naturalness’ of biodynamic agronomies. In front of me, a young vigneron in her late thirties explained why she did not belong to the ‘clan’ of biodynamic vigneron in Switzerland. For her, the ‘real revolution would have been not to have a certification label’, since engagement with biodynamics was not effectively correlated with wine quality and sustainability. She said that biodynamics was to be understood as ‘biology in dynamics’, which was about comprehending the numerous processes of ‘nature’ and how to work effectively with them in order to achieve wine excellence. These processes were documented by scientific disciplines such as biology, pedology, and entomology and were turned into pragmatic know-how by agronomical sciences. In her framing, the local provenance of the products used in the preparations was fundamental. She explained the principles of cow manure preparation inserted into cow horns (also known in the jargon as the ‘500’) as underlying the aim ‘to multiply micro-organisms’. In other words, she explained that these micro-organisms were ‘bioreactors’ and that it was ‘very important

that these bioreactors are from the beginning in line with our terroir' (Neuchâtel, 6 February 2018). In her view, biodynamics had to do with a strong sense of place and locality, and the principles of biodynamics must be applied to every local climate and biotope in which vigneron carry out their work.

Another vigneron I encountered in the region of Lavaux (Vaud) spoke of the preparatory principles as 'biochemistry'. Responding to my question about how he would explain the efficiency of his preparations, he replied that while 'dynamizing' one 'activates humic bacteria [related to humus] in water measuring 35 degrees [Celsius]'. By doing so, the practitioner 'gives them oxygen if we dynamize for one hour, which raises the proportion of oxygen to eighty percent' (Vaud, 6 September 2017). This then enables bacteria to develop. He indicated that this was homeopathy—'it is not esoteric'—and that 'it works' for him. He made references in which direct experiences of the senses, inner feelings, and common vernacular scientific knowledge were enmeshed. Examples like the two just cited are commonly found in the vigneron's framing of their practices. These observations reinsert biodynamics into the realm of contemporary agronomies and 'neutralize' the alterity of the practice by locating it within the familiarity of scientific epistemologies (Altglas 2014: 315).

Within these framings, biodynamics is conceptualized as a set of 'recipes' and 'methods' one should follow. The overall and complex cosmological worldview promoted by Rudolf Steiner is then fragmented and decontextualized, and thus readapted in the light of familiar scientific epistemologies. Steiner's alchemical perception of 'forces' and 'influences' as well as the distinction between the sensible and the supersensible world is abandoned. However, among the vigneron who rely more on common ecosystemic environmental knowledge, the idea of the moon's 'influence', as well as notions of the 'memory of water' (see Kaufmann 1993) and the 'intelligence of nature', are mobilized as 'science in becoming'. Interestingly, Bron Taylor's insights into *dark green religion* likewise show how it is often premised upon blurred boundaries between the *naturalistic* or *supernaturalistic*, as well as upon an *animistic* or *gaian religious* axis (Taylor 2010: 16). This is useful for comprehending the adaptation and translation work undertaken by biodynamic vigneron. Indeed, as illustrated here, vigneron who tend to *secularize* biodynamics are mostly displacing the boundaries, maintaining ecosystemic and organicist insights, though considering them as *naturalistic* and using what they perceive to be secular frames of reference.

*Spiritualizing Biodynamics:  
The Complexity of Anthroposophical Continuities*

Wine-drinking culture is filled with poetic references which approximate religious symbols. Biodynamic vigneron likewise include cosmological aspects in their branding that bear some resemblance to common wine poetry. The labels of bottles or the wines' names often mention the words 'alchemy' or 'spiritual bond', refer to the moon's influence, or include poetic descriptions of seasonality, harmony, tradition, naturalness, and of a given vineyard's historical evolution. Vignerons also insert ecological references, as in the case of a vintage that has been called the 'Anthropocene'. On the ground, this particular language is often an indication that the vigneron operate within a 'holistic' framework. Searching for this kind of language is one strategy I used to encounter 'out of scope' vigneron who were also involved in biodynamics. However, this also led me to vigneron who were very critical of biodynamics. It revealed just how widespread ecological concerns are among vigneron, many of whom rely on folk wisdom in their daily work. For instance, one of them considered including proverbs in his annual work plans. Yet he would still make use of agrochemistry in a limited way in order to guarantee a good harvest and to reduce the risk of losing it.

In the interviews, vigneron tended to deploy ontological references to 'nature' akin to 'dark green religion' (Taylor 2010). Yet, these references were often ambiguous, and raised the question of whether they were merely reverence metaphors or whether they implied the existence and influence of *supernaturalistic* entities like a 'nature principle'. For instance, vigneron spoke of an 'intelligence of nature'—the notion that 'nature' or the planet has an order and a teleology. For my informants, the germination of specific seeds occurred according to a plan of soil regeneration and resilience. Indeed, vigneron who avoid agrochemistry, especially herbicides, discover new plants every year that start growing between the rows of vines, ranging from legumes, which provide nitrogen to the soil, to others such as wild strawberries, depending on the soil's state and microbiological composition. These would be classified as 'bioindicative plants' and considered a marker of the soil's current state. In this respect, references to an 'intelligence of nature' are in line with organicist perspectives such as those found in James Lovelock's 'Gaia theory' (2000). Nature is commonly conceived as either a biochemical self-regulating ecosystem ('de-cosmologization') or an agent and living organism which regulates itself just like human bodies self-regulate and therefore have intrinsic values and finalities. This ambivalence was

exemplified by one of the vigneron who was engaged with the bio-organic certification label but also practiced biodynamic agronomies. Speaking of the earth as a caring, yet too tolerant mother, he cited a poem he wrote in 2000:

To be succinct, I was asking mother earth: Don't do anything for a year. Don't let anything grow just to shock their senses. Stop cleaning up after them and fixing their mistakes. Leave them in their excrement for a year, just to teach them a lesson. That was my message, in essence. (Vaud, 5 September 2017, my translation)

This vigneron, who also took care of livestock and cultivated medicinal plants, pointed to the Jura Mountains just above where we were standing.<sup>13</sup> Likely inspired by alternative soil microbiologists (Bourguignon and Bourguignon 2008) and agroforestry engineers (Zürcher 2016) whose writings on the importance of trees and forests have received much attention from the Swiss media and in bookshops, he described the function of the forests for the planet with awe:

We look at the Jura—it is just magnificent. And you see, all these plants, if everything stopped, in 50 years, there would be forest all around. I am telling you, everything would be covered with forest because nature, she has a plan. And her plan is to advance, advance and cover and protect the earth, always. And this gigantic forest covering all of the earth, it is just magnificent. (Vaud, 5 September 2017, my translation)<sup>14</sup>

In his discourse, it is unclear where he stood on the ontological or metaphorical view of 'nature' and the planet.<sup>15</sup> Other vigneron were less ambiguous in the way they conceived of 'nature' and the planet as having direct agency. These vigneron were more comfortable claiming neo-shamanistic inspirations and viewpoints alongside biodynamics. One vigneron had decided to let a particular tree species grow in his domain, even between the rows of vine. He had the intuition that trying to fight against the pests (parasites, fungi, diseases) would cause them to follow a strategy of massive reproduction in order to survive. As a practitioner of neo-shamanism, he had stopped making biodynamic preparations a few years prior in favor of what he called 'elixirs'—water 'charged' with intention. As I related my previous anthropological studies on Marian apparition sites in Europe (Amiotte-Suchet and Grandjean 2013), he laughed and explained that he used 'energized'

13. The Jura Mountains are a geological formation covered by forests of fir trees that vertically traverses the western part of Switzerland.

14. In French, 'nature' is grammatically feminine.

15. Nor is it certain that social scientists should assume neat ontological demarcations when classifying their observations (see Graeber 2015).

water from the French Catholic shrine of Lourdes to make his elixirs. He was also involved in 'ethereal pacts' with pests and with other species present in his wine-growing area. He negotiated mentally with them regarding the territory they were allowed to occupy and the places and plants they were to avoid. By his own account, this approach was not always successful, as it depended on his state of mind and on the rightness of his intentions.

These are just a couple of the many examples of vigneron who claimed that they had exceeded the 'conventional' biodynamic specifications of the Demeter certification label. Neo-shamanism is one major trend that seems to be increasingly present among vigneron working within 'holistic' frameworks. Yet I also found references to energies and vortexes, work with crystals and natural essences, and experiences of inter-species communication to be quite common. By presenting and explaining their approach to wine-craft in such a manner, vigneron distanced themselves from, or complemented, common *naturalistic forms* of knowledge. They thereby *spiritualized* biodynamics and creatively contributed to expanding Steiner's cosmological insights or to combining such insights with other frameworks, thus 'subjectivizing' their own approaches to biodynamics and personal well-being (Sointu and Woodhead 2008). For instance, one vigneron detailed at length the astrological illustration of the solar system she had painted on her wall in light of what she had read and understood of Rudolf Steiner's thought. When I asked her what the objective of biodynamics was in her view, she spontaneously answered: 'Live better!'. Another vigneron stated that he had no idea what the efficiency principles of biodynamics were, but he nonetheless used biodynamic methods since he felt that his profession had become 're-enchanted' and that his body had been 'boosted' by making biodynamic preparations. Following Sointu and Woodhead (2008: 265), this highlights 'how contemporary holistic spiritualities and health practices serve to bring a valued self into being by way of body-work'. Nonetheless, in biodynamics the notion of 'wellness' is extended to harvested plants, biotopes, *and* practitioners.

*Discussion: How Dark Green are the Wine-crafting  
Agronomies in Switzerland?*

This article has highlighted how Swiss biodynamic vigneron are currently *adapting* and *translating* Rudolf Steiner's esoteric worldview. While they do not find esotericism *per se* particularly appealing, they engage with Steiner's approach mostly due to environmental and health concerns. They also mentioned nature, spirituality, the ethics of

entrepreneurship, and wine excellence as reasons for working within a 'holistic' framework, in addition to drawing from standard bio-organic approaches to grape harvesting and wine-crafting. Regarding the framing of the principles of their biodynamic preparations, I observed two main variations, each of which contrasted with the approach promulgated by anthroposophical biodynamics. One seeks epistemological references and familiarity within secular *naturalistic* frameworks (*secularization*). The other process (*spiritualization*) considers biodynamics as a 'continuity of Anthroposophy' and situates it in the realm of contemporary spirituality movements. It also features important embodied elements, such as those present in contemporary spirituality movements that are widespread in Switzerland. This partly indicates how Anthroposophy and its cosmology have become a general lifestyle and have grown in popularity (Knoblauch 2008, 2014), slowly undermining social boundaries such as those defining the 'secular' or the 'religious' while providing a new professional ethos and alternative lifestyles, social practices, and cultural artefacts in public spaces (Huss 2014). *Secularization* and *spiritualization* are not necessarily opposing processes, as vigneron can mobilize multiple registers, depending on audience or time of year (or the amount of wine consumed while answering the questions of a curious anthropologist!).

In the introduction, I stated that biodynamic wine-crafting could be labelled a *dark green agronomy*, following Bron Taylor's (2010) seminal work. With regard to this concept, I am interested in asking whether 'religious resembling' phenomena or social practices that are generally thought to have religious and spiritual dimensions are necessarily reducible to these religious views? In fact, when one asks how the wine-crafting profession *adapts* and *translates* Steiner's cosmological insights, part of the answer is already in the question: they *adapt* and *translate* it according to local and situational preoccupations and professional specificities. Though biodynamic vigneron tend to display reverence toward a 'nature principle', they also develop specific and ultra-local understandings of their vineyards—their so-called 'terroirs'—and of their wines as being more 'expressive' or 'communicative'. *Idealism* and *pragmatism* seem to intertwine, just as *naturalistic* and *supernaturalistic* understandings seem to bridge *secular* and *religious* dimensions. Yet, by following a reified religious 'radicalism', do they remain *dark green* and challenge a 'shallow' secular order? Or, on the contrary, do they demonstrate a 'subtle spirituality' (Becci et al., this volume) that bridges the distinction between secular and religious dimensions and environmental activism?

I will not respond to this concluding question in detail but rather open new research prospects. Indeed, Kennet Granholm (2008) considers that movements such as Anthroposophy or Theosophy are apt illustrations of how 'esoteric' traditions from the (pre-)Enlightenment era had secularized by the end of nineteenth century. Steiner's original blending—'spiritual science'—is already an assessment of a changing modern *ethos* struggling against so-called dominant 'religious dogmas' (Campbell 2007). Peter van der Veer's argument regarding 'the spiritual and the secular' as 'produced simultaneously as two connected alternatives to institutionalized religion in Euro-American modernity' (van der Veer 2009: 1097) highlights how these two variations do not stand in opposition but are rather more complementary than we might have initially thought. In other words, as opposing alternatives to 'institutionalized religion', spiritual and secular dimensions have been shaped through mutual interaction in Euro-American modernity. Throughout the twentieth century, movements have sought to bridge these two social categories. This, however, is only a scholarly view of the phenomenon. Vignerons themselves might give other explanations.

As an illustration, while one vigneron was teaching me to prune vine stalks, he asked me to detail the outputs of my research. I spoke about *secularization* and *spiritualization* for about twenty minutes, fearing that I was being overly 'intellectual'. After I had finished, the vigneron remained silent for a while and continued pruning. Breaking the silence, he then stated that for him it was no big deal to secularize biodynamics, as long as it enabled other vignerons to spiritualize their work in turn. This last statement stands in contradistinction to what Steve Bruce prophesied in his book, *Secular Beats Spiritual* (2017), namely that spiritual movements and dimensions are an intermediate stage toward increasingly secularized societal models. The vigneron suggested that through specific secular adaptations and translations of spiritual cosmologies like that of Rudolf Steiner, vignerons could contribute to *spiritualizing* the secular. Without probably knowing it, this vigneron was suggesting important new research insights upon the secular and spiritual nexus in Western societies, insights that both contradicts secularization theories and calls over a 'religious revival'.

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