

The Farm, an Individuality

Katherine Castelliz

Rudolf Steiner's idea of the farm as an individuality which he put forward in his agricultural course given at Koberwitz, Silesia, in 1924, is not only a key to bio-dynamic farming; the understanding of its full implications is a real challenge. It can be looked at from different sides and in different ways and each is justified and significant.

If we consider nature's basic cycle, beginning with the plant that grows in the soil and serves the animals as food while the animal in its turn gives its dung to the soil in which the plant grows, then we must say this is a closed circle. It's a closed and self-sufficient organism in spite of the fact that not all animals are plant-eaters and not all animals are plant eaters and not all plants pass through an animal metabolism

On a farm, which is to begin with, a parcel of land arbitrarily Taken out of nature. the underlying pattern is the same. There is the soil, the plants and the animals. However, no two farms are identical. Farms differ in soil, elevation, water supply, streams or ponds, etc. Some are level. others have slopes facing in one direction or another. The soil can be deep or strewn with stones and rocks. So individual farms differ from one another.

Now the farmer comes and works his farm. Very many different things can happen. Farms can be run in all sorts of ways which may or may not be dictated by one or the other peculiarity mentioned above. There is however one thing all farms have in common, (except stockless farms but these are not farms in the true sense.) All farms have a physical body represented by the mineral kingdom, an etheric body represented by the plants, an astral body represented by the animals and an ego which is the ego of the farmer.

On a farm some of the animals and what they produce and a proportion of the plants grown there are always sold away to provide food for people Not everything stays on a farm, lives and dies there, and therefore there cannot be the perfect, self-contained cycle we find in nature. Farm produce leaves the farm. On the other hand the farm is managed by man. The farmer runs it according to his ideas. Something is brought into the farm which does not exist in nature: the human ideas. And so the farm can become an individuality through the active presence of man.

We can go a step further. Rudolf Steiner, referring to what he had said in the Agriculture Course regarding the cosmic and earthly nutrition stream and the forming of the brain as the end product of what takes place in the intestine, addressed the young people in Koberwitz on June 17th thus:

“Everything is transformed within the human being, making it possible for us to be able to grasp the spirit. What we thus work over unconsciously finally ends up in the dung heap that fills our brain. Let us learn to think that as human beings we are urged to offer this dung to the world in the right way, that we do not use it in such a way as to want to transform compressed dung into little machines for children! It is mainly in this way that the human being of the present day uses his brain. He does not manure the fields of the spirit with his brain so that the spirit might work in them; he makes mechanisms out of everything. You

see, you must know what the brain is intended for — to manure the fields of the spirit for the gods that come down to human beings — and you must thereby acquire the chaste reverence that can arise out of such an inward contemplation of these matters. If you thus learn to intimate what takes place in the unconscious and in the subconscious and then begin to take up nature, formed in accordance with the image of man, into your knowledge, thereby beholding nature really in connection with the dung, you can see how within nature — slowly, gradually — there rises into consciousness something that otherwise works unconsciously within the human being.”

Then one learns to renew out of one's own initiative what lived a long time ago in faith, tradition. One realises how much from the old “nature-pervaded” clairvoyant times had inevitably to be perpetuated uncomprehended - here we really get down to the essentials. The brain is intended to manure the fields of the spirit for the Gods who descend to man - and - reverence which comes from such inner contemplation. If this is the attitude of those who work on and run a farm, if they are first and foremost concerned with these things, then the farm will indeed become an individuality.

If we can work and live in this way, then we will learn to know how nature as formed in the likeness of what is human, and thus we are then able to see what manuring really means. When manuring the land the substance of the dung is given back to the creative forces of the cosmos so that the spirit can receive it; can receive what is given to it as material substance from the inner metabolism. This leads back to the passage in the agriculture course where Dr. Steiner speaks about the farm as an individuality. "The animal has not got the ego". The brain is the basis for the ego development. In the animal more ego force remains in the manure than it does in Mans.

Therefore, the plant can develop the ego potential., which means that its root growth is guided in the direction to the centre of the Earth, towards its own ego, through its intercourse with the animal manure. When the animal eats the plant it develops the ego potential in its manure and this makes it possible for the plant to grow in the direction of gravity. The process of manuring is something entirely creative. It does not leave things as it finds them, just adding some plant nutrients to the soil, but the mineral earth becomes faintly alive, the plant becomes a little sensitive and the animal receives an awareness in its inner metabolic processes.

It is now easy to see why a farm needs a sufficient number of the right kinds of animals. The cycle from mineral to plant, to animal and via dung back to the soil is not a static one. The interplay between the kingdoms stands in the middle of the farm like a human being with feeling life and awareness. In fact an individuality, But it takes its way through the creative forces of the cosmos.