

Social Renewal Grows out of the Biodynamic Farm

JIM BARAUSKY

Today we have good reasons to be uncertain of our social future. Whereas previously we belonged to tribes and clans, during the course of the 20th century we increasingly viewed ourselves as single isolated individuals. Now in the 21st century, both our personal identity and our social identity have become acutely intertwined with the fate of the earth itself. We have yet to find a way to understand the individual in relationship to a global society that is in conscious relationship to the limited resources of our planet. We need a new idea.

Fifty years ago the environmental movement began to address this complex issue. The environmental movement grew out of a new paradigm of holistic thinking and a realization that complex systems often elude accurate models that produce predictable results. A new hope was born that we would develop a sense for all the peoples of the whole living earth. And that an "ecological consciousness" would not only give us a sense of purpose, but also help guide us to moral and ethical behaviour for the good of all. This movement has undergone many changes. Today much of the energy and imagination of the environmental movement resides in the issue of global warming, carbon emissions, green technologies, and recycling.

Today's local food movement can be also be traced back to the core environmental concept of bioregionalism. Yet today, more than ever, a grasp of the whole is needed so that current conventional wisdom can be seen in the light of common sense. We need a broad view of the whole, an organic systems approach that models the laws of life and is in tune with the universe.

Goethe, an artist and scientist of the 18th century offered us an organic holistic systems approach in his *Metamorphosis of Plants*. He pointed the way for understanding the laws of life, and the fundamental laws of creation. Rather than take a reductionist view of natural law, he viewed the plant as a visible expression of *Natura* - a living and ensouled being who works through lawful, rhythmic progression to manifest creation. The essential nature of the plant can only be grasped if we observe the plant through the eyes of an artist, through imagination. This is the door that admits us to the room of essence or essential qualities.

Understanding the plant from Goethe's artistic perspective also provides us with insight into the larger social question. As understood through Goethe, the plant develops between the Polarities of root leaf and fruit through a process of expansion and contraction.

1. Roots are earth sensitive and display geotropism, that is, earth-centeredness. The roots are sense organs that perceive soil temperature, minerals, microbes and moisture. Roots take hold of what they sense and are quite selective as to what substances they take in.
2. Leaf and shoot processes display heliotropism - sun-centeredness, and a sensitivity to solar and cosmic influences. Through this observation we gain insight into the rhythmic system of the plant that mediates between the two poles of the plant: the

rooting system which senses the earth environment and the flowering and fruit formation.

3. Flowering and fruiting processes are where the plant wills itself into existence. Here substances condensed into character and intention.

These same three gestures are also found in the three principles of alchemy - salt, mercury and sulphur.

1. Salt is the tendency toward form and structure that provides a framework for sensing. We can liken this to thought formation in the human being where we execute an exchange of information and a development of consciousness.
2. Mercury is the mobility-balancing agent and links the circulation of matter or information. It represents transport and distribution in a rhythmic process between the polarity of salt and sulphur.
3. Sulphur is chemical conversion and the transformation of matter and release of energy. It represents material processes and manifestation.

This threefold principle is again reflected in how modern science describes the basic functions of all living organisms.

1. Information exchange.
2. Rhythmic or periodic processes.
3. Metabolism.

Functional threefoldness also describes the human being in similar terms.

1. Information system-brain and sensory organs.
2. Rhythmic functions-connects, harmonizes and balances as in respiration, and cardiovascular system.
3. Metabolic limb system-abdominal organs and extremities that will life into substance.

We quickly grasp that there is a direct correspondence between these four points of view. All of these systems of thought discovered the same underlying principles. These principles are found again and again throughout the manifest world.

This affirms Goethe's insight and Rudolf Steiner's discovery that there is a threefold expression of form and function in all living organisms. Plants, animals and human beings all have an inherent threefold motif. The remedy for our social future as well is a society that is based on threefoldness.

How can we apply our discovery of an organic threefoldness to our social, cultural, economic, and environmental problems?

As a first step, we can look at our need to organize the resources of the earth so we can obtain our basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. Can we form our human enterprises in

accordance with a threefold principle we find in life? The biodynamic farm attempts to do precisely this.

Rudolf Steiner gave indications as to how to steward the farm according to the threefold principle, so the farm itself would begin to function as an organism attuned to the same principles and forces at work in nature. The biodynamic farmer actually shapes the workings of the farm in accordance with the image of the growing plant, the same image that reappears in the form and functions of a human being. We create our farms and our farm culture in harmony with the inner workings of the earth being, *Natura*.

On a biodynamic farm the soils, animals, plants and the human being find an organic interrelationship based on this same holistic pattern of threefoldness. The soils are tilled so the mineral earth becomes living as the oasis for the future fertility needs of the farm. Plants are cultivated to be in harmony with the rhythms of the cosmos. The animals are husbanded to develop their instincts and to develop and maintain a strong bond with human beings. The human being orchestrates this threefold organism, and becomes a partner in working within the framework of natural law.

The farm as a threefold living organism, in harmonious relationship to the unfolding rhythmic laws of creation is also the central motif of a new society. The farm as a threefold entity is also mirrored in a threefold social order.

1. As a cultural and education space, the farm is a classroom and a living laboratory of *labora et ora* (work and prayer). This represents the nature of alchemical salt or the essential the events or the creator.
2. As a sustainable ecological unit, the farm expresses natural rights-labour rights, animal rights, approved practices of conservation, recycling farm wastes and building fertility for future generations, clean air and clear water. This represents alchemical mercury and is in constant movement.
3. As an economic unit, the farm strives toward manifesting associative economics and cooperation. This represents the heath-giving pollen of alchemical sulphur and a flowering of sisterhood and brotherhood into the fruits of a cooperative society.

Human beings on a farm and those served by a farm can long for a renewal of that which lives between human beings. More than just good ideas or compassion for the human condition, between human beings can be seeded and cultivated a true practice of love. Love in the sense of agape, in service to the earth and to humanity. This form of love is available to the society, the beings of nature, and is reflected in the farm animals and plants and the very earth itself.

Lilipoh 2012