

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Allow me in the first place to express my deep satisfaction that this Experimental Circle has been created as suggested by Count Keyserlingk, and extended to include all those concerned with agriculture who are now present for the first time at such a meeting. In point of time, the foundation has come about as follows. To begin with, Herr Stegemann, in response to several requests, communicated some of the things which he and I had discussed together in recent years concerning the various guiding lines in agriculture, which he himself has tested in one way or another in his very praiseworthy endeavours on his own farm. Thence there arose a discussion between him and our good friend Count Keyserlingk, leading in the first place to a consultation during which the resolution which has to-day been read out was drafted.

As a result of this we have come together here to-day. It is deeply satisfying that a number of persons have now found themselves together who will be the bearers, so to speak, of the experiments which will follow the guiding lines (for to begin with they can only be guiding lines) which I have given you in these lectures. These persons will now make experiments in confirmation of these guiding lines, and demonstrate how well they can be used in practice.

At such a moment, however, when so good a beginning has been made, we should also be careful to turn to good account the experiences we have had in the past with our attempts in other domains in the Anthroposophical Movement. Above all, we should avoid the mistakes which only became evident during the years when from the central anthroposophical work — if I may so describe it — we went on to other work which lay more at the periphery. I mean when we began to introduce what Anthroposophical Science must and can be for the several domains of life.

For the work which this Agricultural Circle has before it, it will not be without interest to hear the kind of experiences we have had in introducing Anthroposophical Science, for example, into the scientific life in general. As a general rule, when it came to this point, those who had hitherto administered the central anthroposophical life with real inner faithfulness and devotion in their own way, and those who stood more at the periphery and wanted to apply it to a particular domain of life, did not as a rule confront one another with full mutual understanding.

We experienced it only too well, especially in working with our scientific Research Institutes. There on the one side are the anthroposophists who find their full life in the heart of Anthroposophia itself — in Anthroposophical Science as a world-conception, a content of life which they may even have carried through the world with strong and deep feeling, every moment of their lives. There are the anthroposophists who live Anthroposophia and love it, making it the content of their lives. Generally, though not always, they have the idea that something important has been done when one has gained, here or there, one more adherent, or perhaps several more adherents, for the anthroposophical movement. When they work outwardly at all, their idea seems to be — you will forgive the expression — that people must somehow be able to be won over “by the scruff of the neck.” Imagine, for example, a University professor in some branch of Natural Science. Placed as he is in the very centre of the scientific work on which he is engaged, he ought none the less to be able to be won over there and then — so they imagine.

Such anthroposophists, with all their love and good-will, naturally imagine that we should also be able to get hold of the farmer there and then — to get him too “by the scruff of the neck,” so to speak, from one day to another, into the anthroposophical life — to get him in “lock, stock and barrel” with the land and all that is comprised with it, with all the products which his farm sends out into the world. So do the “central anthroposophists” imagine. They are of course in error. And although many of them say that they are faithful followers of mine, often, alas! though it is true

enough that they are faithful in their inner feeling, they none the less turn a deaf ear to what I have to say in decisive moments. They do not hear it when I say, for instance, that it is utterly naive to imagine that you can win over to Anthroposophical Science some professor or scientist or scholar from one day to the next and without more ado. Of course you cannot. Such a man would have to break with twenty or thirty years of his past life and work, and to do so, he would have to leave an abyss behind him. These things must be faced as they exist in real life. Anthroposophists often imagine that life consists merely in thought. It does not consist in mere thought. I am obliged to say these things, hoping that they may fall upon the right soil.

On the other hand, there are those who out of good and faithful hearts want to unite some special sphere of life with Anthroposophia — some branch of science, for example. They also did not make things quite clear to themselves when they became workers in Spiritual Science. Again and again they set out with the mistaken opinion that we must do these things as they have hitherto been done in Science; that we must proceed precisely in the same way. For instance, there are a number of very good and devoted anthroposophists working with us in Medicine (with regard to what I shall now say, Dr. Wegman is an absolute exception; she always saw quite clearly the necessity prevailing in our Society). But a number of them always seemed to believe that the doctor must now apply what proceeds from anthroposophical therapy in the same medical style and manner to which he has hitherto been accustomed.

What do we then experience? Here it is not so much a question of spreading the central teachings of Spiritual Science; here it is more a question of spreading the anthroposophical life into the world. What did we experience? The other people said “Well, we have done that kind of thing before; we are the experts in that line. That is a thing we can thoroughly grasp with our own methods; we can judge of it without any doubt or difficulty. And yet, what these anthroposophists are bringing forward is quite contrary to what we have hitherto found by our methods.” Then they declared that the things we say and do are wrong.

We had this experience: If our friends tried to imitate the outer scientists, the latter replied that they could do far better. And in such cases it was undeniable; they can in fact apply their methods better, if only for the reason that in the science of the last few years the methods have been swallowing up the science! The sciences of to-day seem to have nothing left but methods. They no longer set out on the objective problems; they have been eaten up by their own methods. To-day therefore, you can have scientific researches without any substance to them whatever.

And we have had this experience: Scientists who had the most excellent command of their own methods became violently angry when anthroposophists came forward and did nothing else but make use of these methods. What does this prove? In spite of all the pretty things that we could do in this way, in spite of the splendid researches that are being done in the Biological Institute, the one thing that emerged was that the other scientists grew wild with anger when our scientists spoke in their lectures on the basis of the very same methods. They were wild with anger, because they only heard again the things they were accustomed to in their own grooves of thought.

But we also had another important experience, namely this: A few of our scientists at last bestirred themselves, and departed to some extent from their old custom of imitating the others. But they only did it half and half. They did it in this way: In the first part of their lectures they would be thoroughly scientific; in the first part of their explanations they would apply all the methods of science, “comme il faut.” Then the audience grew very angry. “Why do they come, clumsily meddling in our affairs? Impertinent fellows, these anthroposophists, meddling in their

dilettante way with our science!”

Then, in the second part of their lectures, our speakers would pass on to the essential life — no longer elaborated in the old way, but derived as anthroposophical content from realms beyond the Earth. And the same people who had previously been angry became exceedingly attentive, hungry to hear more. Then they began to catch fire! They liked the Spiritual Science well enough, but they could not abide (and what is more, as I myself admitted, rightly not), what had been patched together as a confused “mixtum compositum” of Spiritual Science and Science. We cannot make progress on such lines.

I therefore welcome with joy what has now arisen out of Count Keyserlingk's initiative, namely that the professional circle of farmers will now unite on the basis of what we have founded in Dornach — the Natural Science Section. This Section, like all the other things that are now coming before us, is a result of the Christmas Foundation Meeting. From Dornach, in good time, will go out what is intended. There we shall find, out of the heart of Anthroposophia itself, scientific researches and methods of the greatest exactitude.

Only, of course, I cannot agree with Count Keyserlingk's remark that the professional farmers' circle should only be an executive organ. From Dornach, you will soon be convinced, guiding lines and indications will go out which will call for everyone at his post to be a fully independent fellow-worker, provided only that he wishes to work with us. Nay more, as will emerge at the end of my lectures (for I shall have to give the first guiding lines for this work at the close of the present lectures) the foundation for the beginning of our work at Dornach will in the first place have to come from you. The guiding lines we shall have to give will be such that we can only begin on the basis of the answers we receive from you.

From the beginning, therefore, we shall need most active fellow-workers — no mere executive organs. To mention only one thing, which has been a subject of frequent discussions in these days between Count Keyserlingk and myself — an agricultural estate is always an individuality, in the sense that it is never the same as any other. The climate, the conditions of the soil, provide the very first basis for the individuality of a farm. A farming estate in Silesia is not like one in Thuringia, or in South Germany. They are real individualities.

Now, above all in Spiritual Science, vague generalities and abstractions are of no value, least of all when we wish to take a hand in practical life. What is the value of speaking only in vague and general terms of such a practical matter as a farm is? We must always bear in mind the concrete things; then we can understand what has to be applied. Just as the most varied expressions are composed of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, so you will have to deal with what has been given in these lectures. What you are seeking will first have to be composed from the indications given in these lectures — as words are composed from the letters of the alphabet. If on the basis of our sixty members we wish to speak of practical questions, our task, after all, will be to find the practical indications and foundations of work for those sixty individual farmers.

The first thing will be to gather up what we already know. Then our first series of experiments will follow, and we shall work in a really practical way. We therefore need the most active members. That is what we need in the Anthroposophical Society as a whole — good, practical people who will not depart from the principle that practical life, after all, calls forth something that cannot be made real from one day to the next. If those whom I have called the “central anthroposophists” believe that a professor, farmer or doctor — who has been immersed for decades past in a certain milieu and atmosphere — can accept anthroposophical convictions from one day to the next, they are greatly mistaken.

The fact will emerge quickly enough in agriculture! The farming anthroposophist no doubt, if he is idealistic enough, can go over entirely to the anthroposophical way of working — say, between his twenty-ninth and his thirtieth year — even with the work on his farm. But will his fields do likewise? Will the whole Organisation of the farm do likewise? Will those who have to mediate between him and the consumer do likewise — and so on and so on? You cannot make them all anthroposophists at once — from your twenty-ninth to your thirtieth year. And when you begin to see that you cannot do so, it is then that you lose heart. That is the point, my dear friends — *do not lose heart*; know that it is not the momentary success that matters; it is the working on and on with *iron perseverance*.

One man can do more, another less. In the last resort, paradoxical as it may sound, you will be able to do more, the more you restrict yourself in regard to the area of land which you begin to cultivate in our ways. After all, if you go wrong on a small area of land, you will not be spoiling so much as you would on a larger area. Moreover, such improvements as result from our anthroposophical methods will then be able to appear very rapidly, for you will not have much to alter. The inherent efficiency of the methods will be proved more easily than on a large estate. In so practical a sphere as farming these things must come about by mutual agreement if our Circle is to be successful. Indeed, it is very strange — with all good humour and without irony, for one enjoyed it — there has been much talk in these days as to the differences that arose in the first meeting between the Count and Herr Stegemann. Such things bring with them a certain colouring; indeed, I almost thought I should have to consider whether the anthroposophical “Vorstand,” or some one else, should not be asked to be present every evening to bring the warring elements together.

By and by however, I came to quite a different conclusion; namely, that what is here making itself felt is the foundation of a rather intimate mutual tolerance among farmers — an intimate “live and let live” among fellow-farmers. They only have a rough exterior. As a matter of fact the farmer, more than many other people, needs to protect his own skin. It can easily happen that people start interfering with things which he alone understands. And at rock bottom you will discover in him a certain sweet tolerance. All these things must be truly felt, and I only make these observations now because I think it necessary to begin on a right basis from the outset.

Therefore I think I may once again express my deep satisfaction at what has been done by you here. I believe we have truly taken into account the experiences of the Anthroposophical Society. What has now been begun will be a thing of great blessing, and Dornach will not fail to work vigorously with those who wish to be with us as active fellow-workers in this cause.

We can only be glad, that what is now being done in Koberwitz has been thus introduced. And if Count Keyserlingk so frequently refers to the burden I took upon myself in coming here, I for my part would answer — though not in order to call up any more discussion:— What trouble have I had? I had only to travel here, and am here under the best and most beautiful conditions. All the unpleasant talks are undertaken by others; I only have to speak every day, though I confess I stood before these lectures with a certain awe — for they enter into a new domain. My trouble after all, was not so great. But when I see all the trouble to which Count Keyserlingk and his whole household have been put — when I see those who have come here — then I must say, for so it seems to me, that all the countless things that had to be done by those who have helped to enable us to be together here, tower above what I have had to do, who have simply sat down in the middle of it all when all was ready.

In this, then, I cannot agree with the Count. Whatever appreciation or gratitude you feel for the fact that this Agricultural Course has been achieved, I must ask you to direct your gratitude to him, remembering above all that if he had not thought and pondered with such iron strength, and sent his representative to Dornach, never relinquishing his purpose — then, considering the many things that have to be done from Dornach, it is scarcely likely that this Course in the farthest Eastern corner of the country could have been given.

Hence I do not at all agree that your feelings of gratitude should be expended on me, for they belong in the fullest sense to Count Keyserlingk and to his House.

That is what I wished to interpolate in the discussion.

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For the Moment, there is not much more to be said — only this. We in Dornach shall need, from everyone who wishes to work with us in the Circle, a description of what he has beneath his soil, and what he has above it, and how the two are working together. If our indications are to be of use to you, we must know exactly what the things are like, to which these indications refer. You from your practical work will know far better than we can know in Dornach, what is the nature of your soil, what kind of woodland there is and how much, and so on; what has been grown on the farm in the last few years, and what the yield has been. We must know all these things, which, after all, every farmer must know for himself if he wants to run his farm in an intelligent way— with “peasant wit.”

These are the first indications we shall need: what is there on your farm, and what your experiences have been. That is quickly told. As to how these things are to be put together, that will emerge during the further course of the conference. Fresh points of view will be given which may help some of you to grasp the real connections between what the soil yields and what the soil itself is, with all that surrounds it. With these words I think I have adequately characterised the form which Count Keyserlingk wished the members of the Circle to fill in. As to the kind and friendly words which the Count has once again spoken to us all, with his fine-feeling distinction between “farmers” and “scientists,” as though all the farmers were in the Circle and all the scientists at Dornach — this also cannot and must not remain so. We shall have to grow far more together; in Dornach itself, as much as possible of the peasant-farmer must prevail, in spite of our being “scientific.” Moreover, the science that shall come from Dornach must be such as will seem good and evident to the most conservative, “thick-headed” farmer.

I hope it was only a kind of friendliness when Count Keyserlingk said that he did not understand me — a special kind of friendliness. For I am sure we shall soon grow together like twins — Dornach and the Circle. In the end he called me a “Grossbauer,” that is, a yeoman farmer — thereby already showing that he too has a feeling that we can grow together. All the same, I cannot be addressed as such merely on the strength of the little initial attempt I made in stirring the manure — a tack to which I had to give myself just before I came here. (Indeed it had to be continued, for I could not go on stirring long enough. You have to stir for a long time; I could only begin to stir, then someone else had to continue).

These are small matters, but it was not out of this that I originally came. I grew up entirely out of the peasant folk, and in my spirit I have always remained there — I indicated this in my autobiography. Though it was not on a large farming estate such as you have here; in a smaller domain I myself planted potatoes, and though I did not breed horses, at any rate I helped to breed pigs. And in the farmyard of our immediate neighbourhood I lent a hand with the cattle. These things were absolutely near my life for a long time; I took part in them most actively. Thus I am at

any rate lovingly devoted to farming, for I grew up in the midst of it myself, and there is far more of that in me than the little bit of “stirring the manure” just now.

Perhaps I may also declare myself not quite in agreement with another matter at this point. As I look back on my own life, I must say that the most valuable farmer is not the large farmer, but the small peasant farmer who himself as a little boy worked on the farm. And if this is to be realised on a larger scale — translated into scientific terms — then it will truly have to grow “out of the skull of a peasant,” as they say in Lower Austria. In my life this will serve me far more than anything I have subsequently undertaken.

Therefore, I beg you to regard me as the small peasant farmer who has conceived a real love for farming; one who remembers his small peasant farm and who thereby, perhaps, can understand what lives in the peasantry, in the farmers and yeomen of our agricultural life. They will be well understood at Dornach; of that you may rest assured. For I have always had the opinion (this was not meant ironically, though it seems to have been misunderstood) I have always had the opinion that their alleged stupidity or foolishness is “wisdom before God,” that is to say, before the Spirit. I have always considered what the peasants and farmers thought about their things far wiser than what the scientists were thinking. I have invariably found it wiser, and I do so to-day. Far rather would I listen to what is said of his own experiences in a chance conversation, by one who works directly on the soil, than to all the Ahrimanic statistics that issue from our learned science. I have always been glad when I could listen to such things, for I have always found them extremely wise, while, as to science — in its practical effects and conduct I have found it very stupid. This is what we at Dornach are striving for, and this will make our science wise — will make it wise precisely through the so-called “peasant stupidity.” We shall take pains at Dornach to carry a little of this peasant stupidity into our science. Then this stupidity will become — “wisdom before God.”

Let us then work together in this way; it will be a genuinely conservative, yet at the same time a most radical and progressive beginning. And it will always be a beautiful memory to me if this Course becomes the starting point for carrying some of the real and genuine “peasant wit” into the methods of science. I must not say that these methods have become stupid, for that would not be courteous, but they have certainly become dead.

Dr. Wachsmuth has also set aside this deadened science, and has called for a living science which must first be fertilised by true “peasant wisdom.” Let us then grow together thus like good Siamese Twins — Dornach and the Circle. It is said of twins that they have a common feeling and a common thinking. Let us then have this common feeling and thinking; then we shall go forward in the best way in our domain.