

New Steps for the Experimental Circle

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The Address given by Rudolf Steiner during the Koberwitz conference is considered by many an integral part of the Agriculture Course. In it he describes the context and purpose of the newly founded Experimental Circle in a very clear and direct way.

He points to the great and often undervalued wisdom of the traditional peasant farmer, whose lifestyle he had known intimately as a young man. "I have always considered" he said "that what peasants and farmers thought about their things was far wiser than what scientists were thinking." He continues "Far rather would I listen to the wisdom of someone speaking of experiences drawn from his daily work on the field than all the convincing ahrimanic statistics arising from our highly developed science." The importance of true scientific investigation was however also not to be undervalued. He recognised how important it will be for the scientists of the spirit working at the Goetheanum to develop a close working relationship with the inherent peasant wisdom of farming folk and how important it will be for these 'peasant qualities' to be fully embraced and recognised.

These considerations offer for me the key towards understanding what was really intended with the Experimental Circle. In the first place it is a forum in which active biodynamic farmers and gardeners can share their farming experiences together but also their inner contemplations. With regard to research it is often difficult for farmers, whose lives are devoted to enhancing the well-being of the farm organisms in their care, to consider setting up comparative trials. If out of experience or through intuition a farmer discovers a beneficial measure, he will wish to apply it to the whole farm and not deprive any part of it. Research on a farm often takes an intuitive form. A farmer will look for instance at an animal or a field of corn and as a result of years of experience and close observation will somehow know what is needed. This valuable skill learnt over many years is often referred to as developing a 'knowing eye'. This relationship between a farmer and the individuality of the farm is a quality that is closely akin to what Steiner described as peasant wisdom. I believe that this is a key aspect of the work in the Experimental Circle.

As well as the Experimental Circle there is the Agriculture Section of the School of Spiritual Science. This school has been described as the place where spiritual research takes place. Spiritual research must in the first place be considered as possible only for someone with clairvoyant capacities. I believe however that spiritual research also involves a grappling with the results of the existing spiritual research such as has been carried out by Rudolf Steiner. The enormous amount of material available is a resource that can be used to deepen our understanding of many issues related to life and to agriculture. Sharing experiences along with an ongoing study of anthroposophy and the Agriculture Course can open the way for researching solutions to all manner of agricultural issues. By bringing intuitive farming experience and spiritual research

together in this way it may be possible to find answers to such burning current issues as for instance the increasingly widespread presence of TB.

It could also help form a grounded opinion regarding the merits or otherwise of using 'cosmic pipes' or radionics in agriculture and on a loftier level, it could contribute towards an increased understanding of the spiritual hierarchies and their working.

For many years the relationship between the Experimental Circle and the Agriculture Section at the Goetheanum has been under discussion. Some of the aspects of this relationship were summarised in my article in last winter's Notes and Correspondence. It will perhaps be clear from the above observations that the Experimental Circle and the Agriculture Section belong together. In his Address, Steiner emphasised that these two need to "grow together like true Siamese twins" so that real 'peasant wisdom' can begin to fertilise a new and living science. See also my article of last year.

Members of the Experimental Circle, meeting at Hood Manor in Devon this February, felt that the time had come to take the courageous step of linking up consciously with the newly formed Section for Agriculture and so establish a UK based expression of Section work in the field of agriculture. This move will bring to conscious expression the two aspects of work within the Experimental Circle and lead to the realisation of one of the original objectives set out during the Koberwitz conference namely, to achieve an ever closer working together with the scientific wellspring of anthroposophy. As the UK expression of the Agriculture Section, the Experimental Circle will be able to rediscover its essential purpose and become once again a source of esoteric deepening for the biodynamic movement.

At the meeting it was agreed that:

- The Experimental Circle becomes a conscious expression of the Agriculture Section in the UK.
- Membership is open to all biodynamic farmers, gardeners and foresters who are also members of the Biodynamic Agricultural Association
- Membership is also open any member of the School of Spiritual Science (Class Member) who would like to contribute to the work.
- Anyone wishing to join should write a letter to the coordinating committee giving a brief description of themselves and their particular interests.
- A coordinating committee of Class members has been formed (Michael Atherton, Alan Brockman and Bernard Jarman). They will maintain the link with the Goetheanum and AS in GB. Membership of this committee will be reviewed annually.
- This decision is being published in the next Notes and Correspondence. If within four weeks of publication there are no serious objections, the proposal will be implemented.