

About the application of human manure.

The question of one of the readers and of one article in the last number of the "Mitteilungen" are a good opportunity to make some remarks about this important subject. In "Gäa Sophia II" was another article by Dreidax dealing with this subject in a most illuminating way.

We find in textbooks only the chemical analysis of human excrements as compared with those of animals. From this quantitative point of view it would be very worthwhile to make great efforts to save this "valuable" manure. Out of such ideas all the various efforts may have arisen to make use of human excrements which are in towns available in such enormous quantities. At first one sees always a very good effect the plants growing big and fat. But very soon after the harvest certain disadvantages become visible. It is very difficult to keep the products and they rot very quickly. Prepared as human food they give a most ugly smell and it is a matter of fact that only the poorer population buys such vegetables. Without going too much into the details (there is a great amount of statistics and other material available about this question) I may mention, that in Berlin eg. the greatest part of the human excrements is not longer used for the production of human food but only of grass which is afterwards given to horses and cows in town. The fact that those eat it, is no proof of a good quality at all, as they cannot choose.

In order to come to a real understanding of the difference between animal and human manure let us recall what Mr. Rudolf Steiner says about this problem in the Agricultural Course. We have to see in the brain pure earthly matter, but cosmic forces. And this earthly matter is the substantial basis for the highest part of a human being, for the Ego. The animal has no ego, and this makes a great difference. Because we have to see in the brain an endpoint of a development, of which the contents of the intestines are an earlier stage, all is excreted through the intestines as a substance with the potentiality to become brain. Dr. Steiner goes so far as to call the brain a "developed manure heap". Man must transmute as much as possible of intestine-content into brain because his Ego wants a physical bearer. The animal manure contains on the other hand far more "potential ego" human manure is lacking of these Ego-forces.

Out of many lectures of Dr. Steiner's we know to consider Man as the reversed plant, the root corresponding with the head-system. It is a great difference, whether I supply a plant with a manure which contains ego-forces or which is lacking of them. In the second case I do not satisfy the plant at all this means, the produced plant is not a complete one. The plant needs these Ego-forces for the proper connection with the cosmos. One must take the whole farm as an organism in all reality and one must meditate about this picture. The animal eats the green parts of the plant and after this food has passed through the body of an animal it is given to the plant as manure. Therewith the astral forces living above the plant, surrounding the plant, are developed higher and approach the Ego-stage. And if then afterwards the root is eaten, this most mineralized

part of the plant is carried to the brain, as Rudolf Steiner tells us that root-food nourishes the brain.

In case Man eats plants grown with the help of human manure, lacking of Ego-forces, his brain is not properly nourished and one cannot expect that the Ego will find the suitable basis for its best development. One cannot restrict these dangerous effects to the roots. It is obvious that a plant with a wrongly treated root cannot be healthy in the other parts. Such considerations ought not to be neglected going into the reasons of the terrifying increase of mental deficiency.

But also the effect of food grown with the help of human manure on animals is a very bad one. It was said that the brain is earthly matter also in Animals. The animal has no Ego in the physical plane but nevertheless its brain is filled with cosmic forces. These are wanted immensely by the animal and all the instincts etc. are due to their presence. Therefore Dr. Steiner indicates as one essential part of food for young animals roots, especially carrots. When we feed or animals chemically or, with roots not sufficiently permeated with this cosmic Ego-force, we make the animal unfit from the very begin. And here again, we have a reason for the fact, that also in animals the weakness increases in various directions. Dr. Steiner was asked whether it was allowed to treat meadows and pastures with human manure and he refused it with very severe words calling such a procedure extremely harmful."

The subject in question reminds us to give far more attention to the instincts of animals. It is quite well known fact that grazing animals avoid those places where they have dropped their own excrement and the expert farmer arranges always to have, for instance, a horse grazing with cows, because, the horses eat that grass which is disliked by the cows while these do not mind to eat the grass from around the droppings of a horse etc. In such farms, which are better called milk factories, those instincts lead the cowmen to that procedure that he puts cow manure into the drink for the calves thereby destroying their Instinct. Such calves afterwards do not dislike grass which is spoiled by their own droppings:

One chapter of this problem wants still a very deep study: China. It is known that the Chinese peasant makes use of human manure to a very large extent. This is especially a most astonishing fact if one takes into consideration that the sense of taste is very highly developed in the Chinese people, as they are able to distinguish between 40 or more varieties of tea without being specially trained for it. In the German literature there are not many details about this manuring method, and I would be very thankful for hints where I may find more about this point. Of course we must not forget that the Chinese are an Eastern nation, where the Ego plays quite a different part. One ought to know too, whether really also the higher classes eat the food grown in such a way or if perhaps the use is restricted to the poorer Chinese.

Dealing in such a way with the problem of human manure as Dr. Steiner taught us, we are obliged

to come to practical propositions what to do with it. Of course on a farm the excrements of these working on the farm may be added to the general manure heap, because also Man belongs to the "farm organism". In towns there will be probably a destruction by fire the best solution, also from the hygienic point of view.

It seemed not desirable to me to show in more details the harmful effect of human manure on Man or animal. Nevertheless I am very thankful for any indications in this direction. We must be able to show to the world facts. In this case Dr Steiner enabled us so wonderfully to illuminate an extremely important problem from the point of view of spiritual science. Once more we see what a practical point of view what a practical thing Anthroposophy is and how even in such practical things the sense of responsibility and morality is called upon.

C.A M

Notes and correspondence – August 1929