

Wachsmuth introduction to second edition of the Agriculture Course
November 1929

Out of the Anthroposophy, the Spiritual Science which he founded, Rudolf Steiner had given fresh inspirations for every domain of knowledge and of life, and it was only natural that in the course of time farmers too approached him, asking him to help with spiritual knowledge and practical advice in the unsolved difficulties and problems of Agriculture. Already in earlier years, Herr Ernst Stegemann and Count Lerchenfeld as practising farmers had received from Dr. Steiner fresh indications, pointing towards an Agriculture built on spiritual knowledge.

At Dornach too, Herr Ehrenfried Pleiffer and I were able to carry out a few experiments under Dr. Steiner's immediate guidance. A few of the preparations, subsequently mentioned in the Course, were prepared and subjected to the cosmic influences of the rhythms of the year.

Dr. Steiner himself, in spite of immense pressure of work, did not refrain from coming with us to a fairly distant plot of land to test the first finished preparations. He helped us in the further elaboration and use of the preparations, gave us advice as to the methods, and lent a hand himself.

More and more farmers longed for a systematic description of the new guiding lines in a complete Lecture-course; and at last, in the Spring of 1924, in response to the earnest request of Count Alexander Keyserlingk who had been sent with this mission to Dornach by Count Carl von Keyserlingk, Dr. Steiner consented to give the Agriculture Course at Koberwitz in Silesia.

Dr. Steiner wrote about it himself in the Weekly News of the Anthroposophical Society, 22nd June 1924, as follows: - "For some time past it has been the wish of a number of anthroposophists, whose profession has to do with farming, that I should hold a Course of lectures containing what can be said about Agriculture out of an anthroposophical insight. From the 7th to the 16th June I was able to find time to respond to this wish. Koberwitz near Breslau, where Count Keyserlingk manages a large agricultural estate in an exemplary way, was one of the places naturally given for such a Course. It seemed only right to speak of Agriculture at a place where we were surrounded on every hand by the things and processes to which allusion was being made. The right surrounding gives the right tone and colour to such a gathering...

"My subject was, to describe the essential nature of the products of Agriculture and the conditions under which they can arise. The aim of the lectures was to arrive at practical ideas, uniting what has already been gained by farming experience and scientific experiment, with spiritual insight into these things...

"Our friend, Herr Stegemann, spoke at the very beginning of the Conference, of matters that arose for him from conversations I had been able to have with him a considerable time ago, on agricultural questions. On the basis of what I had then said, he has already

made experiments on the estate under his management. He spoke of the results he had obtained, and of his own wishes arising from these results.

"Stegemann's remarks were followed by Count Keyserlingk's proposal to the effect that proper experiments should be made on the basis of what would be given in the Course. To this end, an association of professional farmers should be formed. Farmers' Circle was in fact founded in the subsequent meeting of all farmers present.

"It was agreed that the content of the lectures be regarded primarily as hints and indications, which for the time being should not be spoken of outside this Circle, but should be looked upon as a basis for experiment. By means of such experiment, it should eventually be brought into a form suitable for publication. The Farmers' Circle was declared to be a union of persons within the framework of the Science Section at the Goetheanum. experimental work should continue to receive its aim and guidance from this Section."

Impulses of far-reaching importance for the future were given in this Course; and all who had partaken in it returned to their places of work strengthened with fresh insight, with renewed hope and energy. Many to whom Agriculture had even become a burden, as a result of barren and materialistic industrialisation, realised again quite suddenly the deep spiritual background of this profession above all, and returned with fresh devotion, with points of view entirely transformed, to their work on plant and animal and on the soil.

Great as the influence of nutrition is upon the life of every single one and of the whole community, agricultural questions are among the central problems of our time.

A large proportion of farmers in the majority of civilised countries have by now become convinced that the materialistic methods hitherto applied, directed as they were to the purely material aspect, have led to a blind alley in theory and practice.

Not only the farmer but the whole of civilised mankind has begun to suffer the results. A new foundation for Agriculture is therefore undoubtedly a turning-point of historic import. Rudolf Steiner himself felt it to be so. shall never forget how he said to me in his simple way, as we were travelling back after the Course: "Now once again we have made a great step forward!"

If any one merely expects to find in this Course an enumeration of a few easily made preparations, the good effects of which can be exploited in the shortest imaginable time, he does not understand what is intended and had better leave the Course unread. In the first place, our entire attitude to the living kingdoms of Nature is in need of a fresh orientation, The Science of yesterday and to-day, working as it has done with the methods of a materialistic and mechanical ago, has had to stop the phenomena of life. Therefore a very fundamental change is needed.

The agriculturist is prepared for this change, may perhaps feel, when he has read this Course, that he must now begin anew in many an essential pointy he will also find that

the new orientation is necessary, and of good effect if carried through consistently in practice.

Undoubtedly transition from the old methods to the new will have to take place slowly, systematically and organically. That was given here as a first indication only, will need to be elaborated, modified according to the available opportunities, and adapted to geographical, cultural and other Local conditions.

The same would be true of any other methods, and Rudolf Steiner himself emphasized it repeatedly and earnestly

Nevertheless, whoever enters thoroughly into the science that is here presented will presently discover - as the farmers who have been working with these methods for several years past have done - that the most valuable results are to be obtained in practice if the methods are carried through with diligence and insight.

Thus, in accordance with Rudolf Steiner's own wishes, Experimental Circles have been able to be formed in several European where the new methods are being carried out in practice. For the assistance of farmers who are beginning with these methods, and who may benefit from the experience of those who have been familiar with them for some time past; for the exchange of ideas and experience; for the avoidance of unnecessary mistakes; and for mutual information concerning any possible improvements in the "biological-dynamic" methods; the Science Section of the Goetheanum and the Experimental Circles of the various countries arrange periodic Conferences, Lecture-courses, etc. (Compare the volume "Gaia-Sophia", Year-book of the Science Section at the Goetheanum - Vol: 1V, "Landwirtschaft" - where further particulars are given as to local information-centres, supply of preparations etc.)

For help received in preparing this second Edition of the Course, my thanks are due to several friends and fellow-workers. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer gave most essential assistance in the revision of the manuscript and in the proof-reading. Frau Dr. L. Kolisko kindly lent us her short-hand report, with the help of which important improvements in the text were made possible, as compared with the text of the first Edition.

Herr E. Vögler helped in drawing up the index, and Fraulein E. Reiser kindly made the copies of the drawings. Beside those improvements, an Appendix has been added to the new edition. In this Appendix we have put together indications relating to Agriculture which Dr. Steiner had privately given to a variety of persons.

Goetheanum, Dornach near Basle.

November 1929.

For the Science Section at the Goetheanum

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