

BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION

A Course by Anthony Mecca

AN EXCERPT FROM

LESSON 1

Introduction to an Anthroposophical
Approach to Agriculture and Nutrition

By Anthony Mecca



EduCareDo
International Research and Learning Centre
based on the work of Rudolf Steiner

Greetings dear friend and caretaker of the Earth! A warm welcome to you as we begin to explore and work with the life activities of the human being, the Earth, and the surrounding cosmos together. I am grateful to be on this journey with you to more deeply and broadly understand, experience, and develop our bodies, souls, and spirits, and our common home: the living, solid ground we walk upon, the flowing waters' ripples and waves, the streaming air between and above us, and the abundant light and warmth surrounding us.

Thankfully we are not lone beings here on Earth. Along with our fellow human beings we strive to live in communion with the kingdoms of nature, our mineral, plant, and animal companions, as well as with the multitudes of spiritual beings and forces weaving among us and within us, streaming from our fellow earthly beings and the heavens above, from the planets, the stars, and further afield. The unceasing work of the kingdoms of nature and spiritual beings working in service of humanity and the Earth provides endless inspiration. I hope your work in this course will support a greater connection to this inspiration coming alive in you.

We will work practically, experientially, and artistically to form a relationship with our fellow beings on this journey so that we may each find our way to develop capacities to serve the healthy development of the Earth and the Earth's inhabitants. This course is meant to both elucidate understandings of biodynamic agriculture and nutrition and challenge us to grow at the same time, ultimately enriching our lives.

Though you may feel yourself to be familiar with nature, agriculture, and nutrition, we will take an uncommon point of departure. I encourage you to be open, honest, and patient with yourself in your knowledge and capacities, with your work with the content and exercises contained herein, and also with the other beings with whom we will be working to converse and engage. Self-knowledge and evaluation are key to growing and developing new ways of seeing and being.

We will be working directly with agriculture and nutrition through the lens of anthroposophy, or spiritual science. Whether you are familiar and well-practiced in these realms, or are a relative newcomer, we will walk this path together to form a dialogue and co-create with nature and cosmos in our farms, gardens, or any other endeavor to awaken and strengthen a connection with the Earth, on a moral, ethical basis. What could it mean to 'morally co-create' in the context of agriculture and spiritual science? We explore this question throughout the course but for now you may observe what initially arises in you in relation to this question.

Biodynamic agriculture has its foundations in and is supported by the principles and practices of anthroposophy, a path of knowledge guiding the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe. It is also referred to as spiritual science, or as referred to in one of EduCareDo founder Erwin Berney's first lessons, "Inner Development for World Development". Biodynamics refers to the dynamic, living forces and activities that create and organize biological life, and how we may come to know and work with them. It was originally referred to as Anthroposophical Agriculture and known by the Demeter brand,

and the name Biodynamics came into being through the founding group of farmers and was brought into the world about 14 years after its founding when Ehrenfreid Pfeiffer published his book *Biodynamic Farming and Gardening* and founded the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association in America in 1938.

In the early 1900s, accelerating after the first World War, agriculture went through a drastic change. Many farmers, veterinarians, and others working in agriculture noticed that food quality, plant longevity and vitality, seed viability, animal fertility, and soil health were quickly deteriorating.

It is not only human moral development that is degenerating but also what human activity has made of the Earth and what lies just above the Earth. This degeneration can be confirmed statistically and is the subject of discussion in agricultural organizations, and yet it seems that nothing can be done about it. Even materialistic farmers nowadays - if they don't just live from day to day but give some thought to what is happening on a daily basis - can calculate in approximately how many decades their products will have degenerated to such an extent that they can no longer serve as human nourishment. It will certainly be within this century. This is a cosmic issue as well as an earthly issue. Precisely from the example of agriculture, we can see how necessary it is to derive forces from the spirit, forces that are as yet quite unknown. This is necessary not only for the sake of somehow improving agriculture, but so that human life on Earth can continue at all, since as physical beings we depend on what the Earth provides.¹

A handful of agriculturalists already familiar with Rudolf Steiner's work² as a spiritual researcher and teacher requested that he offer a series of lectures on agriculture. Steiner had previously offered insight and encouraged new initiatives in various fields of endeavor including Waldorf education, anthroposophical medicine, social issues, the arts, and architecture.

In early June, 1924, he gave a series of 8 lectures entitled "Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture" in Koberwitz, a town that was then a part of Silesia, and is now in Poland. Around 100 people attended the lectures, which had a festival-like atmosphere including artistic activities, communal meals, social time, other lectures, and esoteric lessons. The majority of the farmers present were well-versed in the agriculture of the day as well as familiar with anthroposophy. Given his audience, the course builds upon an assumption of the foundations of anthroposophy and does not go into the details of basic farming, but instead offers broader and deeper perspectives for directly working with the spiritual activity behind the life and development of the soil, plants, animals, and human nutrition.

There is a great deal of agricultural work taking place today that makes use of various methods of organic, regenerative, and biodynamic farming practices. As in many areas of

life, it can be challenging to make sense of it all. What is actually happening as a result of implementing each method? How healthy is the activity in the short term? In the long term? And how may it relate to your situation and questions?

Each farm and piece of Earth are unique, as is each human being, and though there are general guidelines, each requires an individual approach to their care. This year-long course in biodynamic agriculture and nutrition weaves together major topics from Steiner's agricultural course and other work with experientially-grounded concepts from spiritual science, which will allow one to build capacities to understand the how and why of biodynamics, as well as other methods of agriculture and nutrition, and how they may be useful in your situation. This foundation will help you more readily approach Steiner's lectures directly if you are interested. We will also explore how biodynamics has evolved in the last 100 years and how we may meet the needs of agriculture, the Earth, and humanity today.

Agriculture and nutrition occupy a curious space in our current world. It is clear they are both severely challenged as we can see through the general lack of vitality and health in nature and the human being. The common materialistic point of view produces a frustrating and disease-causing inability to comprehend the depths of these challenges. Both agriculture and nutrition are central to our lives, and it's imperative to come to know them in their fullness again. How has this challenge come about? What can we do about it? How do we realize where we, individually and collectively, stand in relationship to agriculture and nutrition? How can we discern where we may take steps in our development? How may we grow and heal the Earth and humanity?

Throughout this course we will look at the manifestations of agriculture and nutrition not only from a global perspective, but also in our individual lives. We will explore a variety of tools to foster the ability to perceive, experience, and direct the forces active in the world and within each of us to support the evolution of agriculture and nutrition. We will work to clearly examine sense perceptible phenomena in its wholeness, and take further steps to know directly what exists behind these phenomena in the realms of life, soul, and spirit. Thank you for your interest and participation in this important work.

In this first lesson we will explore an overview of agriculture and nutrition from evolutionary, historical, and cosmological perspectives, looking at where we are today and how we can find understanding that is relevant to our lives, and that of the Earth. This time is important not just because we are the ones participating in it, but because of the unprecedented changes that have occurred over the last 150-200 years and the potential choices that humanity is currently facing in regard to how agriculture and humanity will move forward. This context will provide a foundation to comprehend the inner and outer predicament we find ourselves in, and how we may work creatively towards health and healing.

Subsequent lessons will weave together revolutionary views of elements of agriculture and nutrition and new ways of participating that contribute to this healing based on indications

from Rudolf Steiner, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, Rudolf Hauschka, Karl Koenig, Lily and Eugen Kolisko, Jochen Bockemuhl, and many others. We will delve into holistic ways of perceiving and finding meaning in our farms, in our gardens, or simply in a moment's communion with the natural world, in order to deepen and clarify inner experiences through the senses and imagination, and to contribute ethically and morally to the building of our world together.

EXERCISE 1 - STARTING QUESTIONS

Why are you participating in this course? What do you hope to learn and experience? Contemplate and journal on these questions.

Drawing on your work with the questions above, please narrow them down and form three initial, more practical questions that you will carry with you and refer back to through the course.

For example, if from your journaling you find that you are interested in how to understand and work with the biodynamic preparations, you would form this into a question such as 'how can I understand the biodynamic preparations and how to work with them practically?' and/or 'how do the biodynamic preparations contribute to the health of the Earth and human beings?'

Spirit, Life, and Matter

A fundamental aspect of working with biodynamic agriculture and nutrition rests on the recognition that our existence on Earth is not purely physical and material; a variety of non-sensory, spiritual activities that originate in our cosmic atmosphere of the surrounding planets, stars, and beyond are continually streaming into the realm of the Earth, imbuing substance with various qualities, forming substance, and influencing other activities. Given a little thought, most people would not question that the Sun and Moon have great influence on biological activity. Some are even clear of their influence on soul or psychological activities in the human being. Despite modern science's interest in the depths of space, the forces behind the material and how they work into life are not often taken into consideration. This is understandable as their effects are subtle, and the methods commonly employed in science are not able to clearly delineate or know them. Spiritual science works to relay research and develop capacities to experience these cosmic, spiritual forces directly in order to come to know them.

Modern science's focus on physical matter continually comes up with new theories involving smaller and smaller entities striving toward new insight and understanding (as we see in the quantum mechanics theory of modern science) while denying the effects of many non-material forces. The forces that are worked with are conceived of as if the universe were made of lots of tiny billiard balls interacting in extremely complex ways. Central to modern science are densifying, gravitational, fragmenting, and physical heat forces. The forces of electricity, magnetism, and atomic energy are also important in materialistic science because