An abstract painting with a complex composition of vibrant colors including red, blue, green, yellow, and brown. A prominent white, geometric, crystalline structure is drawn across the upper left portion of the image. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and layered colors.

Accompanying Animals with Dignity into the Future

Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum 2015



Encounter between human and pig on the Dottenfelderhof. Photo of Guy Sidora

JOAN SLEIGH

GIVING ANIMALS A NAME

In my homeland of South Africa we are living in close connection with the wild environment. Wild animals have their home here and they come into closer contact with human beings than they do in Europe. Meetings that take place between wild animals and human beings can be very pure, dignified and filled with respect but they can also be brutal and full of fear.

A herd of wild elephants from the Thula Thula Reserve in Kwa-zulu Natal needed to be taken on by Lawrence Anthony since they would otherwise have had to be shot. The wild herdsman Anthony risked his own life as he sought to prevent the herd of elephants taking a run at the high tension electric fencing in order to escape. His voice and calm presence of mind made them stop and stand still in front of him. The traumatised matriarch of the herd stood looking at him. He stood his ground and spoke to her until she quietened down. From that moment on a relationship developed between him and the elephants. His understanding of the elephants grew as did also his understanding of himself. He was outwardly helpless and it was only his inner strength that allowed the elephants to trust him. He said "The elephants have taught me a lot. You must understand that communication in the animal world is as natural as a gentle breeze".

Whales and dolphins are members of a special group of mammals. They have left the solid ground in order to live in the sea. They live in groups and have a highly developed sense of community. They mediate a feeling of contentment and of joy, they love being with each other and with people. Since ancient times

stories have been told about the deep bonds of friendship that have been formed with these animals. Their willingness to assist their companions or drowning humans has extended even as far as self sacrifice. Whales which spend their lives roaming the great oceans find sheltered coves for mating and giving birth to their young. They celebrate their families by leaping and diving and whistling and especially when observed by humans.

Do the animals need us in the same way as we need them? The elephants are no longer able to roam freely across Africa. They need us to conserve their habitat. We must protect them, sometimes feed and then care for animals that are sick or wounded. Could it be that by taking these animals under our wing we are liberating them to a certain extent from their struggle to survive and giving them an opportunity to form relationships with humans? Could we say that by recognising and taking an interest in the animals we are providing them with a new sense of well being, or perhaps even of something like an identity? Can we open ourselves to the animals, not just our farms, but our inner selves too, can we acknowledge, see, speak with and love them?

The human being is the most powerful agent of evolution on the earth and is intimately connected to all the kingdoms of nature. Our human ability to understand and give the animals names brings something new to their existence on earth. Is it not our task today through observation, contemplation and study, to give animals their true future names and so help them to fulfil their earthly mission?

PLEASE TAME ME

The animal – a sovereign individual or an object. Neither concept does true justice to the animal.
Between the two stands the responsible keeper who listens to what the animal is asking for.

'Please tame me'; this request from the fox to the Little Prince in the book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is puzzling: Why should a wild animal like a fox want to be tamed by a human being? The usual way animal domestication is described is precisely the opposite – human beings took animals against their will and domesticated them for their own use. This understanding has polarised our society. People seeking to protect animals believe that the best thing would be to release them from human captivity into the wilderness. Others see animals purely as objects to be used for milk or meat production. Sentimentality and utilitarianism thus appear to stand opposed to one another and yet both lead to the same outcome: Rather than domestication the ideal is the artificial production of meat. This is quite concretely being attempted and a lot of money is being invested in it. Suppose however that the domestication of animals did not arise out of a desire to make use of them but because certain animal species desired to come closer to human beings in order to be tamed.

Why cows do not have broad feet

'Who are you brother animal?' When we become aware of an animal in the landscape, it becomes the focal point to which our whole awareness is drawn and it affects the entire surroundings. The whole environment changes, it gains character, becomes ensouled. Compared with plants we have an immediate inner experience. In the Agriculture Course Steiner draws an animal with a large head bending down to the earth. The animal has a head which leads it down towards the earth but with its whole body it tries to move away from the earth. This is why cows and horses stand on tiptoes. A being as large as a cow really would need to have broad feet! I find it amazing that no one seems surprised by this. The animal is not so connected to the earth as we are but as Rudolf Steiner said, it is a guest on the earth. It does not have its ego on the earth but has a group ego in the spiritual world. The visible animal is thus only part of the animal and not a full individuality like a human being which has its own biography.

In the painting by Franz Marc we see: The roe deer seeks to lift itself up into the vertical and become more individual. This roe deer belongs to Franz Marc, he has tamed it, it has a name. Because of the special relationship which Marc had with it, the animal is raised up. Through our relationship to animals we create something new. Animals can show physical love, develop

maternal love but not body free love such as friendship. The love of a human being is therefore nourishment for an animal.

If no connection is formed, no love for the animals is developed and they are treated as mere objects, a compensation will occur through beings that thrive in human suffering. Rudolf Steiner said in this connection: 'The human being will suffer and the animal will experience a certain satisfaction, as a good feeling to balance out its pain... Why are people tortured by creatures – that are really neither animal nor plant but exist between the two and which gain satisfaction when a human being suffers – such as bacteria and the like?...For the being, even though it may not appear in the same form, finds compensation in the course of time through the pain and suffering that the human being must endure'. (GA 143, lecture 17.4.1912). There was a statement recently in the press which read: 'Multi-resistant Bacteria – the Revenge of Animals'.

Today the keeping of livestock is in crisis. Previously one took pride in one's livestock management, manure was a farmer's gold. Today livestock farming is not economically viable and those who keep animals are seen by many as animal exploiters. How then can a farmer regain responsibility for his animals?

When the sheep once more go out to graze

It is important for a livestock farmer to feel more secure about the way he works with animals. One way of achieving this while he is with his livestock, is to take his own feelings seriously and so find out what may not be in harmony. And then be courageous and try out something new. In this way a deeper connection to the animals can be developed. We need a new contract, a new partnership between our society and the animal world. Farmers should cease being defensive about their work and instead take on a more active mediating role between animals and the human beings who have lost their connection to them. An experience with animals is necessary for then new and vital human-animal relationships can begin to evolve. Lots can be done to bring about such meetings and to celebrate special moments. My friend Rémy Picot from Alsace invites all his friends to the farm at Easter when the sheep once more go out to graze. Others perform the Christmas plays on the farm or in the barn. By involving others, not just farmers, we can begin to create a cultural biotope for the animals on our farms.



Photo: Andrea Motte

MARTIN VON MACKENSEN

GAINING ACCESS TO ANIMAL NATURE

Why does the cow not have incisors? Questions need to be asked not only about its physiology but also about the vitality, soul and spirit of a cow.

I would like to say first of all that I intend building my presentation around the cow since I have spent many years working with cattle. Well, I am not a stubborn ox who can't master the swine within him and only stands gaping at a silly cow like a gormless calf! If I inquire after the being of an animal I am very quickly referred back to myself. I recognise myself in my otherness. An animal will never ask: 'Who am I?' It is always itself in the way it moves and lives in the world. Its consciousness is connected with space, time and its own bodily nature. Its sense of well being, of pain, hunger, thirst, of feeling secure within a group, the joy and challenge of movement, its spatial orientation, the reproductive drive, all the desires and instincts, these emotions and soul qualities are all tied to the body.

The animal does not need to learn much, it can draw wisdom from its own bodily nature. And yet a whole species can change and develop new traits of behaviour and relationships with its environment. This brings us to key questions about behavioural biology and evolutionary research. We can experience how even small children can ask deep and searching questions about the nature of the world. This already demonstrates an ability to grasp thoughts independently of the environment and the physical body. It is a process rooted in a free capacity to remember.

We experience this activity differently with animals than with ourselves and yet something similar must nonetheless exist. Although not acknowledged by modern animal psychology there is an opportunity to explore this line of thinking with the help of spiritual science. Rudolf Steiner offers insights into the group souls of animal species, that we perceive only as individual animals, and whose visible part appears like a finger penetrating through the curtain of the sense world. The animal does have an ego but it is on the other side.

The wonder of domestication

Several years ago it was assumed by science that the domestication of animals was the result of human laziness. Today we know through archaeological discoveries, that massive animal sculptures were created on huge pillars in the region of the 'fertile crescent' at a time when there were neither cultivated plants nor domestic animals. The archaeologist Klaus Schmidt believed that these animal representations on the

Rudolf Steiner offers insights into the group souls of animal species, that we perceive only as individual animals, and whose visible part appears like a finger penetrating through the curtain of the sense world.

sacred buildings of the time were harbingers of a future settled agriculture. Changes within the soul-spiritual nature of the human being at that time made this huge transformation in human cultural development possible and brought about a whole new relationship to the animal world. It was possible thanks to the openness of and relationship to the group souls involved, for far reaching changes to be made in the nature of certain animal species.

The physical aspect

Two things can be observed when looking at the skeleton of a cow. As with all horn bearing animals the cow has no upper incisor teeth. Goethe already concluded from this that the forces required for forming them had been withdrawn and had flowed instead into the forming of horns. A second thing is the horizontal nature of the animal and how at its fore end the animal relates to the light filled world of the senses and what is current while its hind end is imbued with regenerative processes, fluidity and metabolism. This orientation in space results in a formative and spiritual principle that is completely different to that of human beings.

The etheric aspect

In so far as the nature of the animal hails not from this world but from a previous planetary condition of the earth, it carries the source of regeneration, vitality and fertility within its etheric body as surplus power. The animal is thus able like ourselves, to access the stream of fertility that is continually flowing towards the earth. This is where I think we can support the animal with what it needs by creating rhythm in the day, giving it farm produced feed and outdoor pasture. The ether body is the source of health and only in good health can an animal produce milk and meat of quality.

The soul aspect

With her focus on internal metabolic activity the cow is occupied with images that originate at least in part from the soul nature of her environment, of her feed stuff, the soil, the air and the water.

How does the animal experience human beings and our relationship to it? We should not think that the animal experiences a person in the way we do. From an animal's perspective the human being is perceived as something as different as an

angel or a ghost might appear to us – as a higher being. Does our behaviour reflect this?

The group soul aspect

Some aspects of the affinity between animals on the earth and what is not incarnated has already been mentioned. As regards the extinction of entire animal species we may ask ourselves to what extent has our behaviour caused the group souls to withdraw their animals from the earth. It may on the face of it have been caused by a virus or the like, but on a spiritual level it is we who were responsible.

And where does the soul aspect of the group soul exist? On the one hand it is the human soul. With regard to the great predators which are rapidly disappearing from the earth, a shocking picture emerges. I would like to go through these five aspects once again and indicate the qualities, approaches and ways of working we should consider if we are to fulfil our agricultural goals with and through the animals. What of our own attitude? We can say nothing other than that deep respect and gratitude towards the animal beings should be cultivated in our souls. And yet, how can we practise this at a time when we are burdened with work and huge economic pressures? Perhaps through a little note on the barn door to remind us each morning and of course if customers are drawn into this it will help too.

Do we make good use of the forces entering into our farm organism through the manure of our animals? Or do we simply practise an ecologically correct way of disposing of it? If we consider the astrality, it is the animal world which creates relationships – from the earthworm to the butterfly. A lot of work has been done on this over the years especially through the contributions made by Jochen Bockemühl at the Goetheanum. But it is no good remaining with the beautiful observations, action is also needed.

With regard to animal vitality we can ask ourselves whether our feeding regime is focused on the needs implicit in the animal's organism. It is important that we don't simply have a feeding system in place but rather have in place 'measures that support greater individualisation'. In relation to the physical aspect, we need to consider the number and proportion of animals living on the farm and contributing to the farm individuality. Here I believe it is a matter of engaging exact and unprejudiced observation.

THE WHITE OF THE ROE DEER

In a great inferno of fallen trees, ruptured forms,
glowing embers and fleeing animals

The painting by Franz Marc entitled “Animal Destiny” was created in 1913 during a great blossoming of culture in central Europe that held the promise of the imminent birth of a truly spiritual age. As a friend of Kandinsky, Else Lasker - Schöler and Arnold Schönberg and as co-founder and director of the ‚Blue Rider‘ artists association, Franz Marc stood at the centre of the cultural optimism of his time. His search was for the spirit: “We are searching behind the veil of appearances for the hidden things of nature. We are looking for and painting the inner spiritual aspects of nature, for these we can see just as previously people saw purple shadows and ether surrounding everything. Why this happens we cannot explain neither for them nor for ourselves. It is part of the times we live in.”

Animals have a central place in the art of Franz Marc. He had a strong relationship to animals throughout his life – dogs, cats, two roe deer (‚Schlick‘ and ‚Hanni‘) and the many horses and cattle in his farming surroundings. For a long time it has seemed to me that the animals painted by Franz Marc crystallise out of the colours and forms of their surroundings. I recently came across a piece from Franz Marc in which he wrote: “How does a horse see the world, or an eagle, a roe deer or a dog? How impoverished and soulless is our convention of placing animals in a landscape that belongs to our eyes, rather than entering into the animal’s soul to tease out the images it sees. The landscape must thus become roe deer. What an amazingly fine sensitivity a painter must have to paint that.”

I can see in this picture an inferno of elemental force, a thunderstorm that will swallow everything and leave nothing behind. The force of it, revealed through colour and form shows most of the animals present being completely overpowered. The impression is of a frightening event of mass destruction that will soon consume the animals. What remains? The white of the roe deer.

While the other animals react with panic, inquisitiveness or resignation only the roe deer seems completely at peace with the situation. It stretches its neck in the direction of the falling tree, stretches it so far as to be unrealistic in length, its entire body appears to follow this stretching. Such a situation would suggest the roe deer to be the first of the animals to perish. In the painting however it is the only one that survives. For it is not so deeply bound into the colours and forms of the picture but is there out of its own movement. A movement under its own control, a movement of active self-sacrifice. Along with this are the two colours, the radiant blue and especially the glistening white, which stand out in the painting and are not sucked into the inferno. The animals clearly face two extreme possibilities – either complete dissolution or an ego-like spiritual survival. A spiritual element appears within the untarnished whiteness of the roe deer that is lifted out from the colours of soul and which bestows on the animal a kind of individuality that will no longer face dissolution by elemental forces. Why the roe deer and why this particular roe deer should have this characteristic remains a mystery of Franz Marc. Perhaps because it lived under his protection?



‘Animal Destiny‘ by Franz Marc – 195 x 263 cm
‘Animal Destiny‘ is the title of the 1913 work by the
expressionist painter who died during the war.
The name was given to it by his friend and
In 1916 the painting fell victim to a fire in a
destroyed a third of it. Paul Klee restored it
original water colour sketches of 1913 and



from Kunstmuseum Basel
work by Franz Marc, the
First World War in 1916.
fellow painter Paul Klee.
warehouse which nearly
in 1919 working from the
sepia photographs, as a

gesture of friendship towards his fallen fellow traveller. The painting
previously exhibited in the new Pinakothek in Munich, was set on a
new canvas. The colour differences serve as a reminder of the fire.
On the side edges of the picture, rounded cross sections of trees
can be recognised which like the veins of the horse point towards
the original title which Marc wrote beneath one of his water colour
studies – "The Trees Reveal Their Rings and the Animals their Veins"

and which he also gave as its title to August Macke. The animals and
plants share and suffer a common fate as he wrote on the reverse
side of his preliminary study: "And all existence is burning sorrow"
an adapted quote from the Buddhist Dhammapada of the Pali canon
of the Gautama Buddha.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND ANIMAL

Observations based on the Michael Letter:
"Where is Man as a being that thinks and remembers?"

The spiritual earth

The Michael Letter opens with the concept of the 'spiritual earth'. Rudolf Steiner begins by considering imagination and thought. We can distinguish thought content from thinking activity. The content of our thoughts generally arises from the world of our senses. The activity of thinking however is not found within the sense world. The human will out of which thought activity is born, is linked to our destiny and is connected with the spiritual earth. Mankind is conscious of itself thanks to the spiritual earth. This awareness of self is the conscious awakening of the will. It is the self. This awakening of ego consciousness occurs as the small child gradually develops and passes through adolescence into adulthood. Even then when it is fully present, this ego needs nurturing. It is endangered and supported by the animal nature within me. Worry, scorn, doubt, these are the beasts within my soul that constantly need overcoming. The human I is also endangered and supported by the animal archetypes in the zodiac that form the boundary to the field of vision of our waking consciousness. The twelvefold qualities of the zodiac that have created me need to be made my own if I am to become human and distinct from the world. In experiencing and being aware of my ego, the animal within me can be released from its chains and even free itself outwardly from its fixed archetypal nature.

Awakening in rhythm

The second section concerns memory. It takes place without a specific organ, in the world of rhythm. We can rely on rhythm, allow ourselves to be cradled by it or even entranced... or we can rise to a higher ego consciousness through rhythm. We then enter into the realm of imagination. The hand stirring of preparations is the perfect example for such rhythmic actions. It is hard work to begin with but the rhythm soon carries it. Our gaze scans the fields, checks out the sky, our thoughts seek to connect with the fields that are to be sprayed. There is a mood of wakeful contemplation, sensitive questioning and a feeling of health giving openness towards the farm – and all the while my ego consciousness is not dumbed down, but raised above the daily cacophony of life.

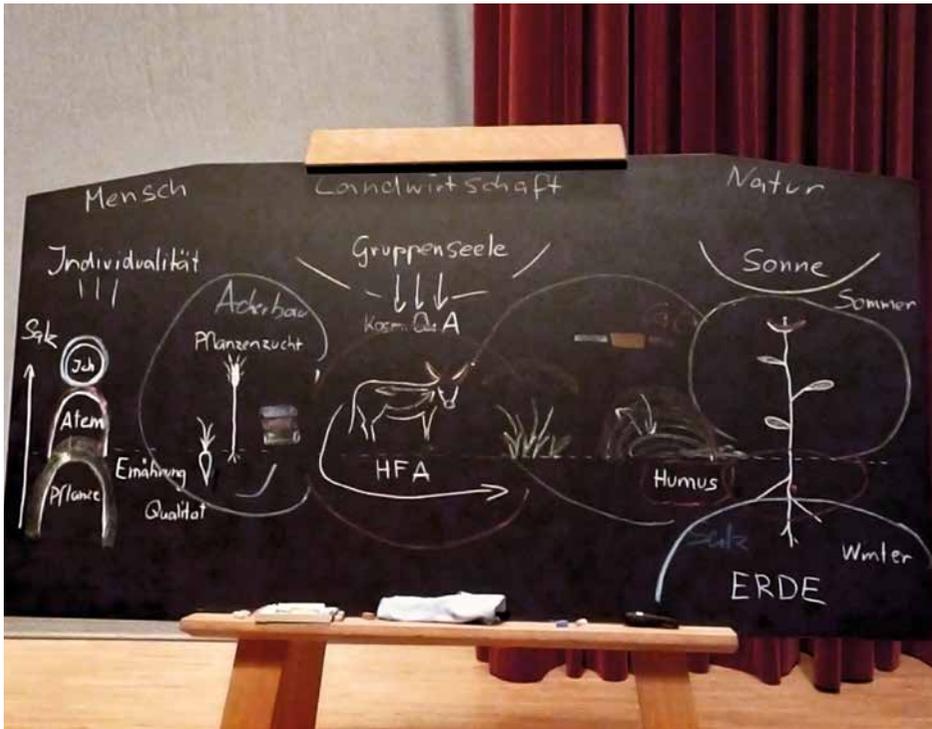
Animals by contrast live entirely within the rhythms of day and year. They form their temporal habitat. They are at one with their rhythms of life just as they are with their ecological surroundings. Domesticated animals depend on us as stockmen to bring rhythm into their lives. Creating rhythm for the animal is about giving them a 'soul home' in which they can feel secure. We can appreciate this since we too need rhythm to replenish our strength. The adult human being however awakens out of this being cradled in rhythm. Unlike the animal he stands upright and lives in the vertical dimension. Due to this uprightness a free middle realm can be formed through which we may ask: "What is 'dignity of life' for an animal?" From this free space the answer is threefold: The human being is higher than the animal and needs to be its guide; The human being is equal to 'brother animal' and the human being is also lower than the animal since the latter possesses specialised skills. Without these mankind could not live as it does on the earth.

Archetypal world pictures

In the third part of the letter Steiner writes: 'The sun forces conjure up archetypal world pictures out of the light'. One image relating to the animal kingdom is that of the archetypal threesome of eagle, lion and cow. In many churches the four evangelists are described in terms of these creatures. Each evangelist tells another aspect of the same story. Is it not amazing that no one person is able to tell the whole story about the life and death of the Son of Man but that it requires four different reports to be given alongside one another? This is given imaginative form through the animals – eagle, lion and bull or cow. The fourth one is the human being. There is a connection between the three animals and the four which includes Man. And these four in turn herald a fifth – the human as Son of God. That which exists separately in nature as the head, breast and metabolic animal types is found as a microcosm in the human constitution as the nerve-sense, rhythmic and metabolic-limb systems. To this one may relate the soul constitution with thinking, feeling and willing. The human being carries the three animals within. That which outwardly creates the three animals works internally to form the human being.

Partnership and Service

Ecological, social and spiritual perspectives on the human animal relationship.
Four examples of how practice and research can support one another



Blackboard drawing on the agricultural organism, by Klaus Wais.

The forces of disintegration predominate in the head region – salt formation

● KLAUS WAIS

A twenty year comparison between biodynamic, organic and conventional farming methods shows how differently soils can react to heavy rainfall. The conventional plots treated for many years with artificial fertilizers have strongly compacted and eroded soil with a poor structure. The biodynamic plots whose soil was treated with composted manure can withstand the rain and retain a more stable crumb structure. These long term trials demonstrate the importance of animal manure for achieving a stable and stress resistant soil structure.

The role of animals can be understood within the context of a farm individuality. Soil humus is of fundamental importance. It arises as a result of the many-layered

digestive activities carried out by numerous micro-organisms and soil creatures upon decaying plant materials. Humus and especially the clay-humus complex is thus an animal creation. Mineral salts are released by the humus during the winter while in summer these nutrients are taken up directly via the plant roots. How does this process relate to that taking place within human beings? The up-building processes within the human metabolic system may be compared to the green plant. The breathing rhythm of our middle realm joins outside with inside and brings the building up and breaking down processes into balance. In the head region the forces of disintegration – the processes of salt formation – predominate.

The building up of substance within the plant morphs into the humus creating process in compost. This can be furthered through the addition of lime and the provision of a cover. The composting process starts off with plant material and ends up thoroughly permeated by animal sub-

stance. This gives us a slow release nitrogen fertilizer which is particularly well suited to meadows and pastures. A further intensification occurs when livestock and especially grass eating ruminants, are kept on a farm. The cosmic forces they seek out in their food correspond to those forces being drawn into the plant as it grows. The group soul of the animals works into this process through a form of instinctive wisdom – Rudolf Steiner speaks of a ‘cosmic-qualitative analysis’. With the production of manure a cycle begins – feed to manure to soil to feed etc. There is thus something of a plant-etheric, animal-astral and thirdly also an ego quality present. The fine substances rising out of the metabolism reach into the head region of the cow but do not provide the foundations for self-consciousness as is the case with the human being. Instead, these forces are redirected back into the metabolism through its horns (which a cow has instead of an ability to think) where they are then reincorporated into the manure. This manure then has the power to give the roots of the crops growing on the arable section of the farm individuality, the strength to grow downwards in the right way and so provide food to nourish the human ego.

If a cow is not fed properly it cannot say: I will do things differently today...

Partnerships with animals

● ANET SPENGLER NEFF

A partnership will only succeed if I accept the way my partner is and respect the way he/she wishes to live. It means taking an interest in one another, evolving a plan for the future and discovering how something new can come about. Only if there is lasting interest will a partnership succeed and this requires a great deal of effort and work. Without interest the partnership will wither. This is how I have experienced human partnerships but how is it with animals?

In some ways it is similar and in other ways different. As with a human partnership it requires engagement on my part – unlimited interest, presence of mind, understanding and the appropriate practical engagement.

How to understand animals? There are several levels – knowledge, direct observation and feelings. Knowledge is important since not everything about the animal can be observed or felt. Understanding can be gained by studying the organs of an animal since each species' way of living is strongly formed by its specialised organs. If we look at the embryonic development of vertebrates it is noticeable how all young embryos look similar in their early stages. The various animal species then start to differentiate themselves and begin to develop the organs their specific nature requires. Other organs remain relatively undeveloped and stay more or less as they were laid out in the embryo. Adolf Portmann the famous biologist from Basel who carried out a lot of research in this direction, spoke of organs as having various degrees of 'morphological importance'. Organs with a high level of morphological importance are those which have become strongly specialised as compared with their embryonic state. This is the case for instance with a bird's wing which is very strongly differentiated when compared to the embryonic arm and hand with five fingers. This wing then takes on supreme importance for the bird's existence. It is the general rule that organs which have become strongly differentiated have a profound effect on an animal's way of life because they enable it to carry out very specific actions. The same is true for the ungulates with their specialised limbs. Of the five fingers and toes that were present in the embryo two develop into the cloven hoofs and the remainder stay undeveloped. Such limbs are highly suited to movement on the ground but useless for activities such as climbing or grasping. These animals and especially the ruminants, have developed a highly advanced system of metabolism which is capable of digesting cellulose-rich material. Such insights can help me understand what a particular animal species requires. An animal like a cow for example is strongly dependent on the conditions it finds itself in. If a cow is not fed the right way it cannot say: I will do things differently today. It suffers unless it can act according to its nature. We are challenged as stock keepers to provide the conditions our animals



.Müller's feed barrier: Even with horns, the cows can quickly give way to a higher-ranking animal

require and this is why true knowledge of our animals is so essential.

A huge amount can also be learned by observing the animals. This is how Christian Müller came to develop his feed barrier for horned cattle. He carefully observed the way cows relate to one another and why lower ranking cows often leave the feed barrier early and do not get enough to eat. The reason is that most feed barriers are made with vertical bars and a horizontal beam across the top to provide stability. Because her eyes look sideways the animal is only able to see the vertical iron bar while it is eating, when it tries to look behind. This means she can hear but not see another cow approaching but knows that she must make space for her if she turns out to be a higher ranking cow. She also knows that because of her horns it is not easy to release herself from the feed barrier and therefore quickly abandons the feed barrier whenever another animal is in the vicinity. It means that a low ranking cow often has a very stressful life. Having observed this situation Christian Müller developed a new kind of feed barrier which has since been introduced throughout Europe wherever cows with horns are being housed. The most important aspect of it is that the bars are set horizontally and not vertically so that the cow can see what is going on behind her, that the clamp can lift up quickly and easily and that the feeding places are wide enough (90-100cm). Simple observations such as these can lead to great improvements all round.

Not only is knowledge and focussed observation important but also ongoing

observation whenever I am with the animals. I can then deepen my relationship to them without having to spend more time in the cow shed than I would otherwise do. It is simply about being truly present (and not thinking of other things) whenever I am with them. This is what makes for a true partnership. Then I know immediately if something is not quite right. I recently had such an experience. A six week old lamb did not come to feed when I fed the flock. All the others came to the trough. I immediately thought the lamb was sick because previously it had always come to the manger with the others. But it had no fever, did not hang its head down and didn't look ill. It simply didn't come to feed. At some point I saw it drinking from its mother and felt somewhat relieved. The next day the same thing happened. It lay under the hay rack and wouldn't come out. I realised that it was afraid of being pushed around by the others. I gave it hay in a place where the other sheep couldn't get to it and it immediately started eating.

A third type of understanding is based on feeling. It arises almost by itself through one's connection to the animals. It comes to expression in moments of being able to sense a situation even when not actually being present. I once had an experience up on the Alp where I worked in which a kid had disappeared. I informed the flock master and added somewhat sheepishly that I had not counted the goats for a couple of days and therefore couldn't say when it went missing. He asked me when I had counted them and I said: "Today". He said "In that case the animal has only been missing since today. You sensed



It seems contradictory, but by judicious grazing the desert can be greened. Photos: Savory Institute.

something wasn't quite right and that's why you counted and if you sensed it today then it has also been missing since today". And so it was. We found the kid in the evening full of life in one of the many holes of that karst landscape. For the flock master it was the most natural thing in the world to have this sensitivity but for me it was a new experience and one that I knew to be true.

One can also try and enter into the animal and feel how it experiences itself. It can help to start with by breathing in the same rhythm as the animal. Try it for yourselves! I must admit however that I do this but rarely. It is usually when I have a sick animal and want to find out whether it has a will to live and what I can do to help. There are thus three ways of developing an understanding for animals – knowledge, observation and a feeling sense. They lead towards a partnership which is not dissimilar to that with humans.

And how does a partnership with animals differ? What comes towards me from them is of course different. Having only animals as partners would not be enough for me because animals cannot engage with me as I with them. They cannot understand me in return. They do meet me with trust, gentleness and affection. And they live out their own animal existence as they are preordained to do. This is why they can be so reliable and productive. If I provide them with all that they need, they will reward me with whatever they can and do so conscientiously. That is why they are our domestic animals. It seems right to me – we invest mental and spiritual work into this partnership in the way

I have described and in return they offer us their surplus forces through which we can feed ourselves.

What then can emerge out of our partnerships with animals by way of new impulses for the future and how will our relationship to them develop? I am convinced there will be further development both for the animals and ourselves for after all the earth as a whole continues to evolve. The new qualities arising out of this partnership are on the one hand the domesticity of animals and on the other the sovereignty of human action in relation to souls other than our own – something we can learn so much about through our relationship with animals. Neither the domesticity of animals nor the sovereignty of human beings could exist without this partnership, something which is perhaps of even greater value than at first thought.

It is of the greatest significance for animals and their future development as to whether they become tame. Animals that have been well cared for and are suitably housed will be less quarrelsome than those in poorly managed herds. With horned cows in loose housing for instance a key factor in reducing discontent apart from the correct housing set up and adequate living space, is dedicated human care. It can even mitigate the problems caused by cramped housing. It has been shown that natural behaviour traits such as the struggle for supremacy in the pecking order, become less frequent when the animals are tamer and more intensively cared for. I sense too that they grow more content through not having to express

that behaviour which is actually natural to their species.

All this work that I have described as important makes sense for the future too. The future for both animals and human beings is to become more gentle and to live together more harmoniously within the same species, between different species and between the kingdoms of nature. This means nothing less than that partnerships are of the future. Each small thing we achieve in this direction is immensely valuable, of that I am convinced. The wonderful thing is that we need not imagine it as being significant only for some distant future time, the value and effect of such dedicated care can be appreciated immediately.

The results of working to drive back the desert are visible after very few years

● CHRISTOPHER KERSTON

There is a widespread belief that grazing animals are a burden to the soil. In reality however the opposite is often true. In regions threatened by desertification, herds of grazing animals help to make the land green again. Allan Savory from Zimbabwe made the observation that soil erosion continues to increase when animals are removed from overgrazed areas. After a number of unsuccessful attempts at reversing desertification by reducing the number of grazing animals, he set out to attain a deeper understanding of how the processes take place in nature. He observed that grazing animals live in herds

and that they only stay in one place for a short time. The animals trample the vegetation causing a layer of mulch to form. Their hooves open the surface crust and create small depressions allowing water to enter once again. The dung and urine of the animals provide valuable nutrients for the soil in an optimal form. Their accumulating droppings mean that the animals do not stay in one place for long but move on. In the short time that wild herds remain in one place the animals are not able to graze a plant more than once. The reserves needed by the plants to regenerate themselves remain intact. The animals move on and will only return after a long period. Their presence is a blessing. The vegetation develops better than it would if no animals came to visit.

The goal of Holistic Management is to imitate nature. This system is now practised widely across the world and especially in areas where deserts are encroaching. The results are visible after only a few years and the farmers who adopt this approach are very pleased with it.

The Savory Institute offers training and online courses and encourages the establishment of active groups throughout the world. The goal for 2015 is to set up a hundred groups practising sustainable grassland management. If this approach to grassland management really takes hold a significant step will have been taken towards rolling back the desert that threatens nearly a third of the earth's cultivable land. (For access visit: www.savory-institute.com

[myshopify.com/collections/online-courses](http://www.myshopify.com/collections/online-courses), and enter the discount code ,biodynamic'

Such an animal is either healed or else slaughtered to extract its final value

● SABRINA MENESTRINA

The word ,veterinary' originates from the Latin ,veterina' and means ,work animal' but also refers to an ,old' or a ,sick' animal i.e. one which is no longer of any use for work, walking or for war! Such an animal will thus be healed or else slaughtered in order to extract its last value. Right to the end, including its final sacrifice the animal has served humanity. And we no longer use the word ,sacrifice' to describe this last gift. In all European languages today it is simply ,slaughter'. And it has become

a bloody slaughter in which animals are slaughtered en masse in huge meat factories with neither contact nor compassion. The sacrifice made by the animals is neither valued nor acknowledged. We no longer show any gratitude towards them. The word ,sacrifice' contains the word ,sacred', something holy and we do not have a feeling for this any more. A sacrifice is an offering, ,a making holy'. That is how it used to be. The animal would sacrifice itself, be blessed and only then could it be eaten. That is the destiny of the meeting between Man and animal. Only with Kosher and Halal slaughter is a sacred ritual still involved. Coming to grips with the death of animals is a great challenge and opportunity for modern humanity to acknowledge its own feelings and gain moments of greater awareness.

Animal welfare laws in Italy have become stricter and it is now a requirement that seriously wounded animals cannot be sent to the abattoir but must be slaughtered on the farm. This means that the farmer and his family are suddenly made aware of what is happening. This brings tears and awakens feelings of guilt. What has been clear to us for many years however is that animals do not fear death. For them death is as natural as birth. The threshold of death as we understand it does not exist for animals. This is of course not the case in the abattoir. There the animals suffer dreadful fear. But this fear is experienced not only by the individual animal but by the whole group right up to the animal group soul. The animals suffer throughout their bodies and their stress oozes out of every pore and right into the meat! We then eat the fear and terror of the animals. And if, as a result of such slaughter practices the quality of the meat is lost, then both the life of the animal and its sacrifice will have been in vain. The gratitude we show towards our animals is expressed through the dignity with which we lead them to their deaths.

As a vet I often find myself healing an animal at one moment and then having to end the life of another some hours later. What feelings does this arouse in me? It is an experience that leads me to develop an emotional distance and yet not with coldness but with a deep sense of compassion for the animal but also for its owner. I cure a sick animal, I teach its owner how to develop a meaningful relationship to it. I understand a great deal about the owner thanks to the illness of his animal, because the animal mirrors the human and can reveal the owner's light and shadow sides.

This too is an aspect of the sacrifice made towards human beings.

I accompany the animal as its doctor, its owner and as my best friend. For the animal supports the human being by providing food, as well as socially and psychologically through work and play. I have learnt to recognise the golden thread linking human beings and animals. Animals appreciate being close to humans and at a certain stage also need us just as we need them. They also long to be recognised by us. It is not yet understood how an animal can know when its owner returns home. Yet everyone can research this for themselves. It is in the first place about developing a common language and then observing and listening to the animal. "One should spend a whole month simply sitting and observing the healthy animals." As I had been told at the university.

St Francis of Assisi in his Cantic of the Sun about the love for all creation said "Do nothing to others that you would not have done to you" and that in harming nature – the stones, the plants, the animals and hence the whole environment – one is causing harm to oneself. His wish was that the animals could live in their surroundings and according to their nature. He probably also believed that in turning with love towards the animals, old karma was released, past blame was softened. As we have learned through Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science, animals form part of our human development. They were separated off in the course of evolution. They remain in us however as soul qualities. In observing and experiencing animals I can learn to understand my own life of soul. Meetings with animals can thus open up the path towards self knowledge. Man know thyself and recognise the animals within. It is not only about releasing animals from their animal nature. The animal looks towards us for recognition. It waits very patiently and generously for our transformation. It is waiting for the human being to sacrifice himself for the animal. In the beginning everything offered itself for humanity. The time is now approaching for humanity to offer itself. Only in this way can the animals be released from their enchantment. The more consciously I act the more sacred is my deed.

Experiences with Animals

Twelve Sketches

With 700 people attending the Agriculture Conference there must surely have been at least as many experiences of the animal-human relationship – here are 12 of the images and approaches that were shared



DEVON STRONG

In Partnership with Animals

The key is being aware of how we act on the farm. In biodynamic agriculture we understand an animal as being a member of a group soul. Because we intervene in their family structure we take on responsibility for sick and wounded animals. The more we learn to understand the animal, acknowledge its instincts, the more are they in turn able to bestow a spiritual energy and a protective sheath around the farm. Grazing and digesting links the animal soul to the landscape. The mechanisation of agriculture works against this.

Taking the life of an animal presents us with a similar challenge to that of stirring a preparation. In both cases we need to act in full consciousness, to invite the elemental world to the event in which the animal group soul and the life stream of a single animal meet. I try hard to develop a relationship with the animal group soul and I can feel how this is acknowledged by the herd. For me it is about creating a ritual that is different for each animal species. My ritual with bison was given to me during a traditional sweat lodge and is based on the ancient native american rites relating to the group soul. It is a four day process which begins with a prayer and a pipe of tobacco. Then come drums and cymbals to form a connection to the group soul and bring the animals into movement.

If I have to kill a sheep or a goat, I begin with an offering. The spirit is called up, the sounds draw the animal close and the animal dies consciously. The blood is allowed to flow from the bison too using a spear to the animal as it raises its leg. In a reversal of the birth pro-

cess, consciousness departs from the body and just as the gift of life given so is here the gift of death. The whole herd gathers and I bring the ceremony to an end. Without fear, without anger I go among the herd and tie prayer flags to the horns. Each animal from the youngest to the oldest then approach and stand round the dead body.

MARCUS CLAUSS

A ruminant – a jack of all trades

Herbivores have a very special metabolic anatomy and need ,fermentation chambers' in which bacteria can work and break down the tough plant cell walls. In some species the fermentation takes place in the large intestine (hind gut fermenters) and in others in the rumen (fore gut fermenters). Ruminants are specialised ,fore gut fermenters'. The ,hind gut fermenters' digest as much as possible using their own enzymes leaving the remainder to be broken down in the large intestine by bacteria which are then excreted with the faeces. The ,fore gut fermenters' do not digest anything by themselves – everything is first broken down by bacteria. Everything remaining including the bacteria are then digested by their own enzymes. Hind gut fermenters such as elephants or koala bears may on occasions eat very little or a great deal. In the former case the food remains in the intestines for a shorter and in the latter case for a longer period. Fore gut fermenters such as sloths eat smaller amounts but more consistently and these remain in the intestines for a long time. The hind gut fermenters are more widespread in nature because of their faster metabolism. The rumen of the ruminants however brings together a thoroughness of digestion with speed. It leaves the finer particles in the rumen and only regurgitates the larger ones, again and again. Ruminants can do both: They can eat very little and digest extremely thoroughly with a low rate of metabolism – like the camel; or eat a lot and digest it thoroughly with a high rate of metabolism. This is why ruminants are such useful animals for agriculture. Rumination is a mechanism that allows animals to eat

more because less time is then required for digesting the assimilated materials. Chewing the cud may seem a quiet and dreamy activity but in reality it is a productive and fast digestive process.



STÉPHANE COZON

Life comes and goes

My wife and I have a farm in south western France. Nearly all our animals were born on the farm and will also die there. We once wanted to sell some sheep from our flock but were shocked by the rough treatment meted out by the livestock trader. This led us to engage Ali who was of Turkish origin, to take on the killing of animals on our farm. With Ali's help I was able to experience the sacrifice made by the sheep. Ali came with a white shirt. I brought a sheep to him not far from the flock. When it had quietened down and accepted its fate, Ali quickly and precisely cut its throat and let the blood flow. One day I had a young ewe who didn't produce any more milk. I decided to slaughter it and bring it to our neighbour. I was able to load it up but then its started bleating as if wanting to ask something. I said to the sheep: ,Until now you have provided us with milk but now it is time for you to feed us with your meat'. The ewe rubbed up on my shoulder and stopped bleating. Her death was then very peaceful.

I had sold a sick cow and knew that sooner or later she would be slaughtered. For a long time I had a bad conscience because I had not allowed the cow to die on the farm. It was an experience that made me realise that I cannot guarantee that an animal will be well treated once it leaves the farm. This is why

it is so important to me that all our animals should remain on the farm until they die. We are lucky in having an abattoir not far from our farm.

As a livestock farmer I try to give my animals a good life and a gentle, peaceful death. I don't always succeed. But the experiences I have had with the death of animals have taught me a lot about life. One day when a sheep died in one corner of the stable, simultaneously another was born in another corner. One life goes, another comes.



HUGO SABINO

Grazing Pigs

Pigs in Argentina today are kept as slaves, cooped up and entirely separated from nature. Soya monocultures and separated production systems make up this desolate picture. Grain quality plummets, fodder loses its value. On an organic or biodynamic farm the keeping of pigs forms part of a complex and integrated cycle of production. The movement of the pig herd around the farm needs to be accompanied by the production of fodder plants. The introduction of pigs to a farm is always a step towards completing the farm organism. In spring or in autumn 14 to 19 sows can be kept with their young on two hectares of land planted with wheat and clover. That is enough to feed them. The young piglets that were born in spring are taken in the autumn to the maize field for fattening which completes the cycle.

For over three years we have been grazing the pigs using an electric fence which is moved daily. The amount of feed produced on this area of land during this time has steadily increased. In the third year we were even able to harvest a crop of hay from the fields where the pigs grazed. This demonstrates how the pigs have increased soil fertility. In Argentina this kind of pig management is referred to as a 'mortgage liberator'. For the amount and value associated with this type of pig production is so good as to be really worth while financially.



REGINA HALLER

Homeopathy in Grand Style

If we look at Brazilian cows we can hardly imagine them having health problems. However ticks and diarrhoea in calves as well as infected wounds caused by the sharp grasses, are very common. Animals are treated conventionally with antibiotics and doused in insecticides. To do this the young calves grazing in huge herds have to be caught and brought in – a difficult and laborious task since the mothers inevitably come along too. A hosing system through which the herd is driven is of course practical but not without its complications. One farmer with 27,000 head of cattle had a huge tick problem which he couldn't master. He was close to giving up. A friend of mine called Monika Filomena Assis de Souza has brought homeopathy and biodynamic farming together. The concept of the farm individuality therefore plays a huge role. She asks about the farm as a whole, the relationships between soil, plants, animals and Man, whether the individuality showed any symptoms of sickness and if everything is right with regard to feed, soil and animals? The homeopathic laws as formulated by Constantin Hering one of the founders of homeopathy, need to be observed namely that healing takes place by treating the highest and innermost organs first and then the lower and outer ones. She applied this principle to the farm and was given 3000 cattle as a trial. The homeopathic treatment was convincing for the farmer but how were the medicines to be applied to the animals? There is water everywhere but no central drinking place. She therefore prepared the medicine as part of a salt lick.

It was soon clear that no simultaneous application of insecticides like Ivormectin or Doramectin could be permitted. The results of treatment vary greatly according to breed. The zebu breeds that are naturally adapted to tropical countries are far more resistant to ticks than animals with European blood or even dairy cattle (Holando Brasileiro, Argentino etc.). In well established herds frequency of dipping can be reduced from 12 times a year in the case of pure zebu, to once

or twice a year. Animals with 25% European blood need dipping two or three times a year. Having no ticks at all is not an objective for then all resistance would disappear.



LAKEW FEKADE

Cows in the Rose Garden

Our farm in Ethiopia lies north east of Addis Ababa 2800 meters above sea level. It started ten years ago with the planting of rose cuttings from Wala. The climate is such that we can pick the flowers by hand twice a year – a very labour intensive procedure. A process of steam distillation is used to produce high grade rose oil. Most of the preparation plants such as dandelion and chamomile are now being grown on the farm. The biodynamic approach allows us to think about compost and animals. Goats and sheep would eat the roses and so we chose to have cows instead. They work tenderly around the roses. We built a deep litter house for them with cubicles although the cows would be happy to sleep outside. We had to secure the building against the hyenas that would sniff around it each morning and planted trees to provide shade. The calves stay with their mothers and so the animals are more peaceful. To keep the herd harmonious and contented it is good to have a cow herd sleep in the cow stall with them. During the day time the animals are allowed to graze between the roses while the cow herd keeps an eye on the young calves so that they don't damage the roses. Valuable compost is produced from their manure.

ABAN BANA

The Cow in India

The cow has been revered in India for thousands of years. She is called 'Gomata' and 'Mata' means mother. The cow is thus to a certain extent seen as the primal mother but also as the primal animal. As 'Kamadenu' she is addressed as the cosmic cow. Already in the most ancient texts of the Veda this veneration of the cow is described. Rudolf Steiner says of the cow in GA 230: "There in the cow is spiritual substance and it is penetrated throughout by physical matter

that is taken up and worked upon by the spiritual substance.” According to Rudolf Steiner the cow brings “this animal ego-hood out of the universe and down to the earth, to the realm of gravity.” It is interesting to see how the wisdom of earlier times becomes knowledge for today through the work of Rudolf Steiner. What the cow produces is called ‚Panchi gavia‘ in India. Five different things are referred to: Milk, butter, yogurt, dung and urine. All five are essential for human and especially Indian culture. Holy fire is created by burning the dung. It releases a very particular aroma and produces very fine ash.



MECHTHILD KNÖSEL

One Step Closer Towards Love

Low Stress Stockmanship is a low stress approach developed especially for cattle by Bud Williams in the USA. Philip Wenz who brought this method to Germany formulated it thus: “Low Stress Stockmanship is a promise I make to the animals. I promise not to shock the animals nor make them anxious in any way. I give animals the time they need. In return the animals form a peaceful and willing partnership with me and they do what I ask of them.” It is really about finding a balance between trust and respect, both must be present in this human-animal relationship. It can be achieved if the animal is able in every situation to rely on a common language. What does this mean in practice? Every animal has its own observation zone, the distance at which it can perceive me (this can vary greatly). Somewhat closer to the animal is its zone of movement which means that my entering it will cause the animal to move. By approaching it or even a whole herd from a certain angle, I can guide in the desired direction. The animal is always directed never enticed. Doing so raises an expectation which inevitably leads to disappointment – in effect a break in trust. By stepping into its movement zone I am putting a certain pressure on the animal causing it to move. As soon as I get the desired response I step back again in order to demonstrate approval. I used to think that I had a good way with

my animals and this was certainly the case on a day to day basis. In more exceptional situations such as when trimming hoofs, or when a heifer came into the milking parlour for the first time, this naïve trust disappeared and stress ensued. The animal was no longer able to rely on something it could trust. Through the approach of Low Stress Stockmanship a ‚qualified trust‘ can be developed even in unusual situations. The animal will then still do what I ask of it so long as I give it time. This living with trust and respect especially in more difficult situations showed me the value of this new approach. Since then I have been learning together with my animals for even though the basic principles may be known old habits die hard and these must first be unravelled. I have discovered for instance that my animals appeared to have little respect for the requests I made of them. Now I can see how able and eager they are to learn.

They once appeared trapped in their lack of respect. For example we had a milking parlour with an entrance to both right and left. Most of the cows were flexible and used both entrances while individual animals insisted on either one or the other. I let this stubbornness pass since I thought attempting to change it would only cause stress. Then I decided to address the issue using the Low Stress Stockmanship system. It was still a challenge to persuade the animal to use another entrance, but given the time and space to learn, it eventually did so and of its own accord.

The day afterwards I understood the 50% rule, namely that next time it will only take half as long and work better each time. Almost with pride the cow now entered from the correct side and in doing so developed her own capacities. I am amazed how well the animals take up such learning opportunities and seem to enjoy doing so. A sensitive and respectful relationship develops between human being and animal. It seems to be something living at the core of the animal's being. It doesn't want to simply plod on with life but co-create and also learn something new. In this way I have been able to come much closer to my goal of developing real love for my animals.

BERNI COURTS

Chewing the Cud

We have a question to answer and my experience is that every question brings further questions.

As human beings we accompany the animals around us and animals are also within us

– these are two thoughts of Rudolf Steiner. Giving animals their dignity means removing them from the ghastly process of industrial production and discovering new ways of living together with them. It is of course part of the biodynamic paradigm that we consider the whole world from the stars right through to social life. The science of social life is very important and especially so for small organisations. When I spoke with David Wilson manager of the flagship organic farm belonging to Prince Charles, he said that what is missing on his farm is the social context.

We are running many pedagogical projects on the farm and we are greatly helped in this by our animals. Over the last twenty years I have been able to gather many personal experiences. Meeting an animal changes something inside us. What is it within an animal that has the power to bring about such catharsis? When young people meet the habit life of a cow, it often opens up the possibility for developing serenity of soul. Our approach starts by enabling the young people who come to us often severely disturbed, to experience a feeling of belonging. Out of this can then grow the capacity for being authentic and original.



JEAN-PAUL ZUSSLIN

I am a Creator of Connections

I have been a biodynamic wine grower on a family farm in Alsace for fifteen years. My family has been managing this farm since 1691 and the vintner profession has been passed on from father to son for 13 generations. We have 16 Ha of vineyard, orchard, grassland and forest. In my grandfather's time we were not only vine growers but also grew grain and kept livestock. It was only in the 1970s that my father decided to limit himself to wine. In the 1990s he came across biodynamic wine growing. The neighbours were at first very sceptical about what was happening in our vineyard but my father was convinced by the biodynamic approach and worked with horn manure, the compost

preparations and grew vegetation among the vines.

When I started in 2000 I sought to develop alternatives to the conventional approach to vinification. Achieving good results in that area, I set about working with cover plantings, green manures and the preparation plants. The vine growing colleges only teach about plant cultivation, never about livestock. We always worked with small tractors but I asked myself whether it would be better with animals. We found someone who could work with horses and in the end decided to have our own draft horse. Because a horse needs to do some work every day we used it to carry the grape harvest home. We started offering horse and coach rides and found many other small jobs for it. Although keeping a horse involves more work it also means we can carry out our work with greater precision and with more regard for quality and aesthetics. We also experience how good it is for the vines. Neighbours, coach drivers and walkers are also interested in the horse and this gives rise to conversations and a general enhancement of the social milieu.

We became aware of how much more interesting a vineyard becomes when different kinds of plants are growing together. We love to go walking among the vineyards now that there is greater diversity, and more plants, flowers and insect species. There are also more birds and we have put up nest boxes to encourage them. Birdsong changes the atmosphere of a place!

For eight years we have been having another farmer's sheep on our land for periods of time. It is not possible on all the fields for there needs to be good fencing and sometimes also shelter for the sheep. In winter the sheep are kept in the vineyard for while the plants are dormant the sheep can happily roam among them. Bits of wool hanging off the vines can be found even in the summer as evidence of grazing sheep. Sheep are part of the vineyard even when they are not physically present. We sense that the sheep have improved the quality of our wine.

We are also working with a bee keeper who brings his bees to us in Clos Liebenberg. The vineyard is greatly changed by having more plants and animals. We think not only of the wine when undertaking such work but on the whole diversity of life.

When I return home after having sprayed horn silica my children always ask me: "What animals have you seen?" The animals thus also awaken the interest of my children in the work. My work as a winegrower has be-

come much more diverse. The task remains the same namely that of producing the best quality wine but that is achieved best in good social and ecological surroundings.

To become a super biodynamic wine grower on one's own is almost impossible but when two or three people come together and complement each other through their work, much becomes possible. Our partnerships have all come about naturally with each person bringing their own interests and impulses. I am now no longer simply a wine grower but also a stockman and a 'creator of connections'.



ULF VOIGTS

With Leopards on the Farm

We farm 250 Ha with cereals, forage crops and green manures, 8000 Ha are grazed by 600 cattle, 30 sheep and 12 horses. 90 people live on Krumhuck and there are some 1500 wild animals on the farm ranging from antelope, springbok and zebra through to wart hogs. To these should be added the predatory cats like leopard, cheetah, hyena, lynx and jackal and of course many small animals and countless insects.

The cattle are herded each day by three herdsmen and spend the twilight hours grazing whenever possible since the nutritional value of the grass is then at its most intense. This is something we have also observed with wild animals. A very close relationship to the animals is achieved by herding them and as a result we no longer lose any animals to predators. Managing the pasture for soil improvement means grazing as many animals as possible on a small area so as to give the pasture a sufficiently long rest period. During the short rainy season which lasts from between three weeks to three months, we have to build up the pastures so that they can be productive throughout the year for both our animals and those in the wild. We count the number of wild animals four times a year and interestingly they seem drawn to our cultivated land. The culling of wild

animals is strictly regulated on ethical and ecological grounds. We have monitored the movements of eight leopards and three cheetahs using GPS neck bands. Achieving a harmonious relationship between our grazing animals and the wild animals remains a serious challenge.

CLAUDIO ELLI

Creating out of Nothing

To make the preparations used in biodynamic agriculture some form of enclosing sheath is always needed to enable a substance to ripen. This points towards a fundamental principle of creation. Rudolf Steiner describes how at the beginning of all existence the Seraphim created an enclosed space within which the Cherubim could form an energy field and in which the Thrones the third group of beings of the first hierarchy, could then set into motion the whole process of creation. This principle of creation is then repeated and other hierarchical beings become involved once they reach the level the first hierarchy had attained at the moment of creation. It is a macrocosmic and a microcosmic process of creation. Thus every egg is the membrane and the sperm the inspirational power that allows the cosmos to create new being. Implied in creation therefore is always differentiation or segmentation. Even with the Christmas Foundation Meeting and the 'creation of anthroposophy' a protective space and differentiation can be found and at the same time a creation out of nothing.

Rudolf Steiner did not want the Christ impulse limited to the churches but rather saw this creation from nothing, this deed of the father God, as continually taking place anew. The Whitsun festival of the free individual is described by Steiner as being created and formed by the Holy Spirit. It seems a paradox at first that the power of individualisation could serve the spirit of humanity. A feeling for the Holy Spirit is very important to biodynamic farmers for it empowers them to implement ideas that go beyond technology. It is not simply about applying techniques that have been learnt but rather about continually researching and imbuing them with new content.

Mankind should imitate the mighty deed of divine creation today. Rudolf Steiner achieved it in his impulse at the Christmas Foundation Meeting and now each person can do the same with their many small acts of creation on their own farms or gardens.

FROM THE WORKSHOPS

They are inspiring and mysterious

● UELI HURTER

Unlike other approaches to organic farming, the keeping of livestock is central to biodynamic agriculture because of its role in building soil fertility, ensouling the landscape and of course also because animal organ material is needed for making the preparations. This organ material is as fascinating as it is off putting, as inspiring as it is mysterious, it has the power to carry and strengthen living and formative forces and yet in order to obtain it, an animal must be killed.

What conclusions can I draw from the form and structure of a horn about the cow's life? Have I any experiences of removing the organs from a freshly slaughtered animal? The two experts Pierre Masson and Uli Johannes König, presented visual material and shared perceptions. These didn't always agree and showed the need for further research. Specially interesting was the description by Uli Johannes König of the way gases move within a cow from the metabolism right up into the horns and how an 'inner air cow' actually exists and gives these heavy animals some inner buoyancy. Pierre Masson demonstrated how to meet the difficult challenge of separating the mesentery, creating little tissue pockets and making them into beautiful packages filled with dandelion flowers. A remaining question was why do we usually describe the preparations in terms of the plants and not the organs?

Working with horses

● WERNER WECKER

Klaus Strüber showed the results of some research he had done on his farm over the last ten years together with the University of Kiel's Soil Science Department. A comparison between using a team of horses weighing 1.6 tons and a small tractor weighing 1.4 tons to cultivate the same crops at the same time on similar soil using the same implements, showed how even such a small tractor causes far more damage to the soil. Working with horses brings about soil regeneration! "If we want to pass on soils to our grand children that are fertile, well aerated and with good water holding capacity, we must urgently changeover to horses".

Introducing horses however requires more labour and more time. The cost of normal agricultural wages means that despite the potential benefits and savings it is still more expensive to work with horses than use a tractor. Werner Wecker described how he finds the necessary labour force for his working horses: Young people who are interested in the work as well as people in biographical crises are eager to come. They help and at the same time get better – they are strengthened both physically and psychologically. "The horses bring us into the present and demand a healthy relationship between thinking, feeling and willing", said one participant from Scotland.

Many questions: How can I arrange my farm so that as a self-contained organism the horses will have work throughout the year? Where can I find the necessary income? "Developing a sustainable form of agriculture with horses requires the understanding of customers and politicians to bring about a rapid change in conditions – the farmer cannot do this alone."

The most important moments

● JEAN-MICHEL FLORIN

The theme of animal slaughter is controversial for the public. There is actually a problem today with the two most important moments in the life of our domestic animals: The stockman loses responsibility for both birth and death. It is made anonymous: Young animals are bought in and then they are slaughtered far from the farm in huge abattoirs for 'hygienic reasons'. These moments, birth and death are of supreme importance to the animal and its relationship to what Steiner refers to as the group soul.

Devon Strong began his workshop by burning holy sage and ritual native american singing. Reverence and seriousness lived in the room. We began with the question: What moves and interests you when thinking of an animal's death? This emotional theme brought out many issues during the conversation. Some questioned whether it is legitimate to kill an animal. Others wondered: How much meat should we be eating? We noticed that the death of animals is kept quiet. No one wants to take responsibility. Killing becomes industrialised. How can a livestock farmer again become responsible for and accompany the death of his animals? For this the slaughter of animals on the farm must be made possible. The first steps have been made. Devon Strong and Stéphane Cozon urged every farmer to think about developing a ritual that could be used before an animal is killed. The farmer also needs to encourage the people who are eating the meat to be involved with the animal's life. In this way the moment of an animal's death can be seen within the contexts of its whole life. Has the animal had a good life? Perhaps in this way a new understanding can be found for the sacrifice made by the animal.

THE EARTH

A GLOBAL GARDEN?

Theme for the Year 2015-2016 –
Cultivating an Active Relationship to Nature .

The garden as an individual and unique place

Like the human being everything alive needs protection if it is to develop in a healthy way. It needs to create a boundary between itself and its surroundings without cutting itself off. This is the archetype of a garden. A garden is essentially a place on the earth to which I connect myself personally, a place that I work intensively, care for, observe and enjoy. It is a place which we are continually developing through our devoted activity, in which we bring the various elements and beings into relationship with one another: Earth, water, warmth, plants and animals. Through this evolutionary development becomes possible.

At the heart of all gardening activity whether it be on a balcony, an allotment, orchard, vineyard, plant nursery, landscape garden or farm, it is the plant which provides nourishment to animals and humans. This also applies to market gardens and to both small and large scale farm enterprises. In all these situations it is about creating a self contained and individualised place that contrasts with the many ‚non-places‘ such as those huge areas of mono-culture, airports, motorways etc. Seen from above every diversity conscious mixed farm is a kind of ‚garden‘. How can we strengthen this ‚garden consciousness‘ on our farms and in our gardens? Could it help to enhance resilience and adaptability and/or alternatively improve fertility and quality? How can we increase the number of such ‚individualised‘ places, develop them and encourage the farm’s further evolution?

A living organism always exists within a certain boundary: There is no such thing as unlimited growth. How can farming be carried out on a human scale? Till what point am I able consciously to penetrate and be responsible for my garden, park or business? Is it always necessary to grow and mechanise? Are there successful examples of intensification on an inner rather than outer level?

The garden as a place of soul nourishment

To the outer aspect of gardening can be added a corresponding inner one. In so far as human beings can take care of the nature around them, they can also take hold of their own ‚wild‘ inner forces. For many people and especially young people gardening offers a unique opportunity for becoming grounded. How can we use these possibilities for inner cultivation (self development,

education, social care, therapy) and make them available to our fellow citizens? Initiatives such as school gardens, therapeutic gardens in hospitals, homes etc., demonstrate the potential of this. The possibilities are far from being exhausted. How can our modern, large scale and highly mechanised farms provide a learning or even healing environment? How could it be made economically and socially viable?

The garden also radiates beauty – something which is essential for our desolate landscapes and restless conurbations. Can a landscape aesthetic be developed further using a biodynamic / anthroposophic approach? Beauty is not simply decoration but can enable the inner nature or being of a material to radiate and express itself. Beauty exists for everyone as a common good. How can beauty become an integral part of every horticultural and agricultural enterprise and make economic sense?

The garden as a resource for social renewal

This raises the question: How can the relationship between town and country be improved? How can we open the doors of our farms to as many people as possible? How can we strengthen links with backyard gardeners, help them to form a network around the farms and make organic and biodynamic approaches more accessible. Urban gardening has become fashionable. Are there examples of urban gardens being managed biodynamically? Is it possible to see a whole town as a garden? How can this impulse be strengthened?

In many countries gardens and small farms are essential for survival with regard to food sovereignty, conservation of resources etc. The World Agriculture Report states: ‚Small scale, labour intensive peasant farms whose strongly resilient production systems grow a diversity of crops, are the guarantors and a source of hope for a supply of food that is sustainable on a social, economic and ecological level.‘ What can we learn from this?

The new theme for the year has thus been sketched out: Can we create a new ‚garden‘ on our farms and in our cultivated landscapes by developing a certain intimacy, diversity of approach and greater connectedness between ourselves and the kingdoms of nature?

The Michael Letter „Man in his Macrocosmic Nature“ (GA26) accompanies the theme – Bibliographical references on our website: sektion-landwirtschaft.org



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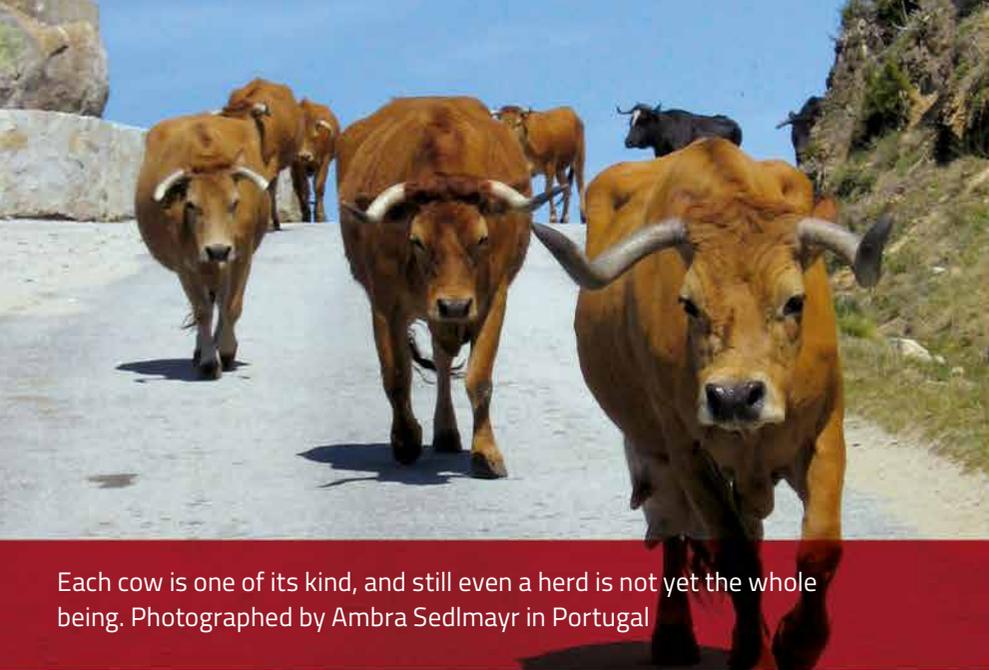
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Each cow is one of its kind, and still even a herd is not yet the whole being. Photographed by Ambra Sedlmayr in Portugal

Ueli Hurter

The Bull and its Ego

The human being receives self-consciousness from the earth or rather from the 'spiritual earth'. Human will activity is lifted into consciousness thereby awakening self-consciousness. This is the ego. How is it then for animals? Or rather, where is an animal's ego?

For many years we have kept a bull on our farm. After three and a half years the bull must be changed to bring new blood into the herd. The young successor bull that we purchase as a calf spends a year on the farm. He receives special treatment as a future 'Lord'. When the youngster joins the herd of twenty five cows he must first assert his position. In the end he reigns supreme as the unchallenged leader of the herd. An organising power then pervades the social fabric of the herd. At the same time he is held by the twenty five cows he is required to serve.

The herd of cows keeps him gentle. This is important for us since he is a ton weight and can become wild. He is always first in the queue and receives a pat on the shoulder each time he enters the barn. We have the mutual respect of two masters, a 'gentleman's agreement' between us.

It could be said that while he has no ego, his ego has him. The bull does not have an individual and self-conscious ego, but on the contrary his ego that is his bull nature, has him. The ego is external and extends throughout the herd. The herd is where it lives. The bull like every other animal does not live solely within its skin, the other half of animal existence is its habitat. The animal almost forms a unity with its surroundings. The soul permeation of a certain habitat through the presence of animals is a kind of reflection of the group soul that does not incarnate.

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