

A biodynamic approach to pests and weeds¹

Balance

Let us assume we have a 'pest' on our land, say some destructive slugs on our salad seedlings. Let us further imagine that we get over our hurt and frustration sufficiently to evaluate the situation. What might we think? We may think that nature has such aggressive competitors for our plants and the slugs are currently winning this battle. However, we have some good tools in our shed to deal with these and once we have removed or killed these slugs we will have won the war with these 'pests'. This military point of view considers slugs as opportunistic raiders with no role apart from their own self-interest. Once these scum are eradicated the whole problem is solved. However, we may think that the slugs are so damaging because the plants they are eating are so weak. In some way, a robust lettuce would be able to repel these slugs and grow to maturity uneaten. This latter appreciation of the slug-lettuce dynamic may lead us to ask why the lettuce was unable to resist the nibbles of the slugs, or why there were so many slugs that season. If there is some ideal balance, has this dynamic been sent out of whack and, if so, what can we do about it? What is the extent of our role in re-establishing this balance?

For this article, stimulated by thinking about biodynamic 'peppers', I propose to start with the physical manifestation of the pests or weeds, even though I consider this is to be starting at the 'effect' end of a chain of cause-and-effect. By discussing what can be achieved by concentrating efforts at this level alone the limitations should become clear. Then we can see if a biodynamic approach enables us to address the situation at deeper levels.

It should become clear that this latter approach is based on the assumption / conviction that the manifest world alone is not the full and fundamental reality. However, for the moment at least, we will not commit ourselves to 'turtles all the way down'² or to some other support for the evidence of our senses.

Starting at the surface

So, our 'pest' is definitely in the garden and if we do not think further we may try and kill or otherwise remove the slugs thinking that this will sort everything out. The slug is an opportunist that has decimated our seedlings and if we remove them all will be well again. Viewed in this way it makes sense to pick them off, use pellets, send in the ducks or introduce some microorganisms that are pathogenic to the slugs. Essentially these are aiming for the same goal of removing the slugs and, if we are successful in this campaign and think no further, we will think we have sorted the problem.

One could use biodynamic 'peppers' as just another means to this end. Although biodynamics is inherently a wholistic discipline - one that considers the biggest context one can encompass - the technique of peppering, taken in isolation, can be at home in the mindset which does not look beyond the immediate presence of a pest. What is peppering?

¹ The editor of *Star and Furrow*, the UK biodynamic magazine, requested an article on biodynamic peppers but I consider that peppers are only a partial answer to the implicit question: What might be done to address pests and weeds within a biodynamic context? If for no one else, I wanted to try and map the bigger picture so I have written this article.

² A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the Sun and how the Sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: "What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise." The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, "What is the tortoise standing on?" "You're very clever, young man, very clever", said the old lady. "But it's turtles all the way down!" - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turtles_all_the_way_down

Peppers³

Some people gather pests or weed seeds, burn them, and sprinkle the resulting ashes in the area they would like to protect from those pests or weeds. This is known as *ashing* or - because of the look of the ashes - *peppering*. What's the origin of this practice, how do you do it, does it work, and, if the technique should be developed, how might this be achieved?

Origin

In lecture 6 of the Agriculture course, RS described the basic technique with variations for different creatures. He used problematic weeds, vertebrates and invertebrates as examples in that order. He began by describing the role of the Moon and its relation to weeds.

“Now a large number of plants - notably those which we ordinarily count as weeds - are greatly influenced by the workings of the Moon ... we get the strongest weeds if we let the kind Moon work down upon them - ... We must contrive to check the full influence of the Moon upon the weeds ... Then we shall set a limit to the propagation of the weeds; they will be unable to reproduce themselves. Now we cannot 'switch off' the Moon. Therefore, we must treat the soil in such a way that the earth is disinclined to receive the lunar influences. ... We can make the weeds reluctant, in a sense, to grow in soil which has thus been treated ...

So now you gather a number of the seeds of the weed in question. ... light a flame - a simple wood-flame is best - and burn the seeds ... by letting their seeds pass through the fire and turn to ash, you will have concentrated in the ash the very opposite force to that which is developed in attracting the Moon forces.

Now use the tiny amount of substance you have thus prepared from a variety of weeds, and scatter it over your fields ... Already in the second year you will see, there is far less of the kind of weed you have thus treated. It no longer grows as rampantly. Moreover, many things in Nature being subject to a cycle of four years, after the fourth year you will see, if you continue sprinkling the pepper year by year, the weed will have ceased to exist on the field in question ...”

Although the ideas may not be self-explanatory the technique is simple enough. What about animals / vertebrates?

“... But we can no longer speak so generally when we come to the animal pests ... catch a fairly young mouse and skin it, ... but you must obtain this skin of the field-mouse at a time when Venus is in the sign of Scorpio... At the time when Venus is in Scorpio, you obtain the skin of the mouse and burn it. Carefully collect the ash and the other constituents that remain over from the burning. ... And there remains, in what is thus destroyed by the fire, the corresponding negative force as against the reproductive power of the field-mouse. Take the pepper you get in this way, and sprinkle it over your fields. In some districts it may be difficult to carry out; then you can afford to do it even more homoeopathically... provided it has been led through the fire at the high conjunction of Venus and Scorpio, you will find this an excellent remedy. Henceforth, your mice will avoid the field.”

And for insects:

“... you do not take part of the insect as you do with the mouse ... take the entire insect. ... It is best to burn it; ... you might also let it decay; ... Now it is necessary to perform this operation when the Sun is in the sign of Taurus... ”

How do you do it?

The above gives the bare bones of the technique: collect the parts, burn them, and scatter the ashes. Since that time many people have had experiences which can flesh out the picture.

1 - The fire:

Steiner suggested a wood fire. Various people have put the seeds, insects or skins in a container such as a tin can or a pan. (Tin cans are burned first to remove any linings, paints and labels.) The contents are then heated until they turn to charcoal. One can use a wood fire, a kitchen stove and pan, or even a blowtorch. Adalbert von Keyserlingk wrote:

³ This section is an enlarged version of the article mentioned in footnote 1.

“... we had already established that the seeds must not remain in an incandescent state for long in the ashing process. The temperature had to be kept relatively low so that the incandescent phase was missed out and a brown ash would remain. Years earlier I had used the process on a chicken farm in England and found that the power which is the opposite of the germinating power is lost at red heat.”⁴

2 - The residue:

In Glen Atkinson's commentary on the agriculture course⁵ he passes on an interesting suggestion:

“Peter Bacchus has long advised that it is the Carbon ash rather than the salt ash that one wants for peppering. So once the ash is collected it is placed in some water and stirred for a few seconds, to dissolve the salt ash. This mixture is then strained through filter paper, and the water discarded. The filter paper is then dried and the ash recollected. This ash is then used for further potentising or spread as suggested ...”

I asked Peter who added:

“It was part of my experience of working with a poisonous pasture weed we call Ragwort [Senecio Jacobii] It can be quite persistent and hard to eradicate. I received the advice about the separation

⁴ A fuller quotation from 'Developing Biodynamic Agriculture' by Adalbert Count Keyserlingk: “The large fireplace in our Sasterhausen laboratory was excellent for making the ash preparations. I just had to make sure sufficient seeds and skins were to hand. We used different sieves to get the charlock seed for the thrashing machines clean, removing all wheat grains. The seeds were then ashed. We did small scale experiments first in experimental beds and later used the method in the field, with the help of Miss Hasche (later in charge of the observatory at Dornach). A whole bucketful of charlock seed was burned for one field experiment. Before that, we had already established that the seeds must not remain in an incandescent state for long in the ashing process. The temperature had to be kept relatively low so that the incandescent phase was missed out and a brown ash would remain. Years earlier I had used the process on a chicken farm in England and found that the power which is the opposite of the germinating power is lost at red heat.

The 6-ha field looked after by Miss Hasche soon showed results. A line as straight as if drawn with a ruler went down the middle of it. One half, where the 'pepper' had been scattered, was completely free of charlock, the other half was soon full of the bright yellow flowers. Sadly, the photographs taken at the time were lost during the war.

The experiments with mice, such a plague on many farms, were most interesting. I was lucky to have a lady on the staff who did not mind skinning mice and rats and putting them on stretchers to dry. We had many mice on our fields and animal houses. I offered the children a penny for every mouse and soon had not only sufficient skins but also the cadavers. These I put into a barrel to rot down completely. This 'compost' was then brought out together with the ash from the skins. Soon not a single mouse was to be found anywhere in the manor house or the experimental gardens, which covered quite a large area.

For another experiment I had concrete boxes made with subdivisions. The top and front of each compartment was open and we put in wire mesh, giving us a row of cages separated by concrete partitions that were about two fingers in thickness. For the experiment, a bag filled with mouse pepper was suspended from the top of the first cage on the left. The mice put in the cages - there were up to 10 of them - were of course all given the same food. We wanted to know if and how the suspended pepper would have an effect on them. The animals on the cages soon died in a sequence that went from left to right. Experiments with the ash of white mice gave a similar result though not quite as definite. We also scattered the ash of rat skins and soon no longer had any rats in the gardens, nor any water voles, though the mill stream had been full of these for a long time. Rats continued as before, however, in the poultry houses that were about 1.5 kilometres away.

It is difficult to get open results in open territory. The experiments I did at that time did however show that:

- ash taken through the red hot stage has no effect, whilst ash that is still slightly brown does, i.e it still contains carbon:
- the distance between the ash and creature plays a role
- rotted down cadavers also have an effect.”

⁵ <http://www.garudabd.org/node/23/>

of the ash from Clive Hull who once lived near Taupo. I had had one experience where the ragwort grew better and stronger than ever. After separating the salt and carbon parts of the ash and triturating it in quarry sand [0.7mm screen] I had a 100% result. This really taught me that paying attention to detail was vital so right from the pulling of the plant from the pasture to drying the seed and root, careful threshing and winnowing to burning in a vessel [Old milk can lid in this case] to washing and filtering, redrying then starting the trituration process with an old pistil and mortar I had from one level teaspoon of ash. The last trituration was done in a commercial concrete mixer for one hour then spread on a five-acre pasture. The burning was done at full moon and the spreading was done in the following descending period near new moon and perigee. In hindsight I thought that it worked so well on the 5 acres that I could probably treated the whole 80 acres with good effect. That all happened in 1973 on a small farm near Otorohanga, N.Z.”⁶

3 – The timing:

When discussing peppers for vertebrates what, precisely, did RS mean by ‘Venus in Scorpio’? There is still debate about this and it would appear that Steiner’s suggestion was not clear even to the delegates at Koberwitz given that he was asked in the third discussion, right after the sixth lecture, first whether he meant Venus in the astronomical sense (“Yes, the one we call the evening star”) and second, “What did you mean by: *When Venus is in the Scorpion.*” Dr Steiner replied: “That means any time when Venus is visible in the sky with the constellation of the Scorpion in the background. Venus has to be behind the Sun”. Simple right? Wrong! A paper was written by the current translator of the Agriculture Course, (Malcolm Gardner: ‘When is Venus Behind the Sun?’)⁷ which addresses this very question. He had thought that a straight-forward interpretation – the evening star in front of Scorpio - was fine but when he found that there were some successful peppers when Venus was the morning star he went back to the drawing board. He asked himself whether *behind* mean temporally or spatially? If we are swayed by the mention of the Evening Star then it could be temporally, ie that Venus is visible in the sky in the evenings because it goes down later than the Sun.⁸ Considered spatially, on the other hand, it would suggest that Venus is on the far side of the Sun as seen from the Earth with Scorpio in the background. If you favour the latter interpretation then the next question that arises is “When is Venus in a high (superior?) conjunction with the Sun against the background of the Scorpion.” The answer is “very rarely and not for a long while to come”. The conjunctions of Venus and the Sun dance around each other making a fairly static pentagram of 5 conjunctions over 8 years. These currently occur in front of the constellations of Libra - Sagittarius - Pisces - Taurus – Leo and will not be back in front of Scorpio for many years. One vertex of the pentagram left Scorpio to enter Libra around the time Steiner was still lecturing.

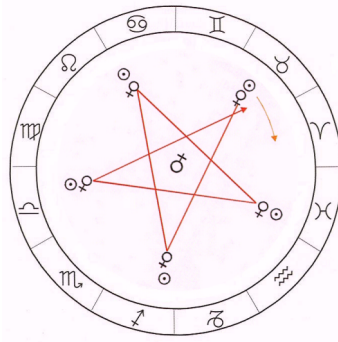
So usually, in practice, vertebrate peppers are created when Venus is in front of the scorpion, sometimes when it is this side of the Sun, sometimes the far side, sometimes as the morning star (Lucifer/Phosphorus) and sometimes as the evening star (Hesperus/Vesper).

Incidentally, why Venus and why Scorpio? When RS was talking about the inner planets he said that the main heavenly body to consider for the plants was the Moon but for animals it was more important to consider Venus and Mercury. Scorpio? In the attribution of the constellations to the parts of the mammalian archetype Scorpio is the hips and reproductive organs.

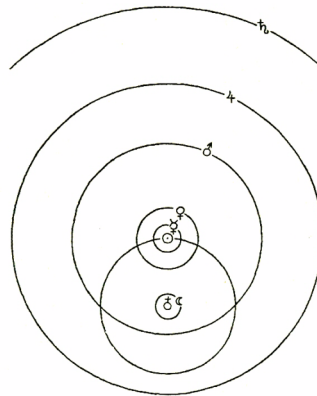
⁶ Personal communication. Another person who had dramatic results with ragwort is Timothy Martin, written up as “Ash Treatment of Ragwort in Ireland”. Timothy also had Maria Thun’s book on ashes translated into English and I thank him for his work and sending me a handwritten copy.

⁷ Applied Biodynamics Spring-Summer 1998. Gardner found that some successful mouse peppers had been made with Venus as the morning star so thought again and consulted a paper by Marius La Rooij called ‘Astronomy of Peppering’ (Biodynamic Newsletter Vol 47#4 Summer 1994) which used Tycho Brahe’s helio-geocentric system.

⁸ Another translation, based upon the notes of Lili Kolisko and issued in 1938 by Dr Guenther Wachsmuth, reads: “Every constellation of Venus is referred to where Venus is to be seen in the sky and behind her the Scorpion, Venus must be following behind the Sun (i.e. as evening Star and not morning Star).”



Venus' pentagram of conjunctions with the Sun



Tycho Brahe's 'dual centre' model of the solar system

4 – To potentise or not?

Several people have tried potentizing these peppers to enhance their effect. Whilst this is a major subject in itself we can pass on that Greg Willis⁹ suggests the 9th or 10th potency and Maria Thun has had 'some deterrent effects' at the 8th potency.¹⁰ Enzo Nastati uses his various techniques to make sure the potentisation is achieved with an excarnating method.¹¹

What is the 'mechanism' of the peppers?

How does the incineration of a pest and the spreading of their ashes have an effect on that pest? To get some idea of this one might note the different levels of the macrocosm to which Dr Steiner refers us in the agriculture course. For the weeds we need go no further than the etheric level whose macrocosmic analogue is the lunar sphere. For the vertebrates one refers to the planet (macrocosmic astral) and the zodiac (macrocosmic spirit/self), whilst for the invertebrates one is looking at the Sun and the zodiac (both of the starry realm).

Rudolf Steiner offers an indication in the agriculture course - that weed peppers limit the reproductive capacity that the Moon brings to the Earth. I have only found one other proffered explanation in print. Enzo Nastati suggests:

“With incineration by contrast there is a complete and rapid separation of the etheric and physical bodies. Scattering the ashes on the soil or potentising them and spraying them on the field will establish a clear signal of separation between the physical and the etheric, so the elemental beings linked to the pest will no longer wish to incarnate in that soil or plant....

For weeds and insects it is sufficient to connect to the forces of the etheric plane, but to make a pepper for a higher animal one must follow other principles. For example, at the level of the

⁹ <http://www.considera.org/board/viewtopic.php?t=38>

¹⁰ <http://tinyurl.com/3qnvzn6> 'Results from the Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar'

¹¹ Foundations For a Development of Potentisation Enzo Nastati – www.moodie.biz/enzobooks.html

*zodiac, one burns only the hide when the animal's reference planet passes in front of the reference constellation. But there is a second method to obtain an effective product: incinerate the part of the animal that most distinguishes it, that most embodies the characteristics of the animal. For example, the most characteristic parts of the rabbit are the ears and testicles, in the rat it is the paws and muzzle. With this burning one frees the "demon" that lives in the animal (which remains linked to the ashes for a time) and brings it to the field. The other animals of the same species, seeing this demon, are terrified and scatter."*¹²

Does it work?

Sometimes it works very well. Here's one report from someone with no familiarity with biodynamics, after the use of a (potentised) pepper against grey squirrels.¹³

"Since applying the potion 2 years ago the little grey darlings have not touched the trees despite our property being on the edge of woodland still overrun with squirrels. It took a while to get the right conditions for application. It was a wet season so we patiently waited for a dry period before we applied. But yes - success!! - and so easy! - all from a tiny spray bottle!! Would highly recommend it to anyone with a squirrel problem!!"

The grey squirrel was burnt in Edinburgh on 20th October 2005 at 5pm.¹⁴ They were taken to the 10 potency following some discussion on the BdNow discussion list.¹⁵

Perhaps because of the uncertainty about the Venus-Scorpio question results are not always so dramatic. This leads on to the next question.

How might the technique be developed?

R&D! Research and development. I think the biodynamic community could improve peppering if experiences are shared, if we let each other know what was done and what were the results¹⁶, and possibly even creating a library of successful peppers from which members can withdraw or to which they can contribute.¹⁷ The empirical approach could reveal the conditions that work by collating information on the successful peppering and looking for the common elements. Between these twins – theory and practice – it should not be beyond us to develop this discipline.

Let us consider an example of working backwards from a fascinating report from Lili Kolisko in her 'Agriculture of Tomorrow' (p242):

"It is very annoying for the farmer if part of his crop is destroyed by mice... Dr Steiner gives strange advice. We have to look for a certain constellation of the planet Venus, collect the skins of mice during this time and burn them. If we scatter these ashes over the field the mice will disappear. It is not necessary to burn the whole mouse, we only need burn the skin.

How can we verify such assertions? The seems so very strange to us. Our first experiment carried out in 1926 will be described. We began by breeding a large number of white mice in order to carry out the necessary experiment during the constellation of Venus. The mice were kept in glass cages covered with wire mesh in a separate room, well equipped for this purpose. Each cage contained a male and female mouse.

The day of the constellation came, the exact hour for the experiment was fixed for four o'clock in the afternoon. We examined the mice every other hour, and found everything in complete order. At two o'clock in the afternoon we examined them for the last time, when feeding them. Some minutes before 4 o'clock we entered the room again and had a real shock. In each of the cages one mouse was killed. The female had killed the males. In all the cages there was the same ghastly spectacle. The killing was done so that the female mouse has bitten through the throat of the male, then opened the skull and begun to eat the brain. Some mice must have started earlier

¹² Understanding And Treating Pests – Pt 1 - Introduction

¹³ <http://considera.org/materiamedicagricultura.html?remtype=3&rem=42>

¹⁴ The timing was suggested by Maria Thun in her Calendar. It was undertaken at the IBIG conference that year with road-kill squirrel and those shot by the forestry commission. This would suggest that Maria Thun is more interested in the Venus Scorpio alignment with the Moon in opposition.

¹⁵ <http://www.considera.org/board/viewtopic.php?t=38>

¹⁶ <http://considera.org/pepdata.html>

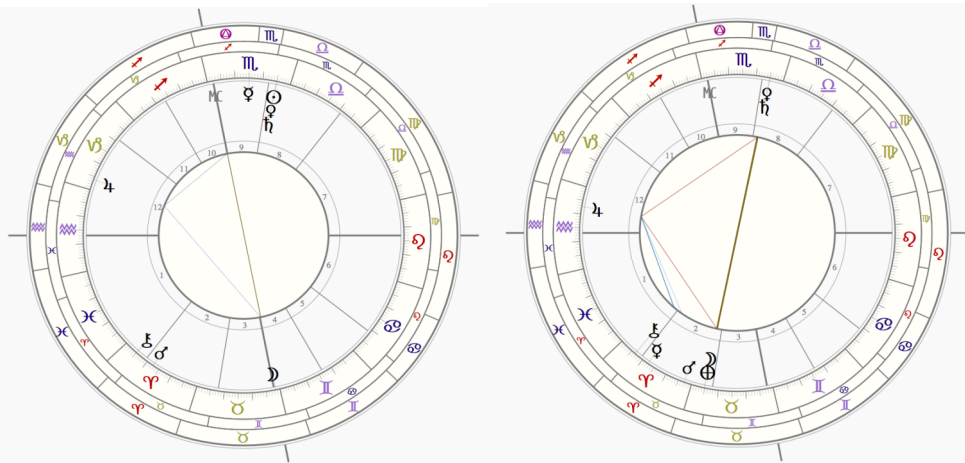
¹⁷ http://www.considera.co.uk/hx/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=33

or worked more quickly, because we found different stages of this terrible process.... They had bitten off the four paws and placed them symmetrically in a square in the sawdust.

We shall never forget this spectacle. Probably we had not fixed the right moment for our experiment. The planet Venus came to the highest effectiveness earlier than we had presumed and the female mice acted under this influence. No other explanation was possible. The constellation of Venus had driven the female mice to kill their mates in the extraordinary way....

... A few years later we had a visit from a young farmer who had tried to get rid of his field mice according to Rudolf Steiner's suggestions. He kept seven mice in a cage on the field, and when the time came to make the preparations, he found only one mouse left. Unfortunately he did not observe whether the mouse which was left was male or female. However, from our previous experiences it can be safe to assume that it was a female mouse who had killed and eaten the others, which must have been male.....¹⁸

Looking at the astronomy for 1926 we can see that there is an (inferior) conjunction of Venus and the Sun on the afternoon of February 7th GMT. A second (superior) conjunction occurs on November 21st (also with Saturn) between midday and 2 pm Stuttgart local time, right on the cusp of Libra and Scorpio. Perhaps we can infer that the latter time witnessed the macabre scenes.¹⁹



Geocentric (l) and heliocentric (r) charts for early afternoon Stuttgart, 21/11/1926

Another inference from this chapter is that exact timing can optimize the procedure.

A third inference is that Lili may have been quite deliberate in not giving the exact details. My strong feeling is that all those who have been involved in this work with peppers remain a little vague, and I think that there is a very good reason for this: I cannot in all conscience prepare an article on peppering without raising the issue of the potential for abuse. What are the ethical issues here? If one could reduce the reproductive potential of almost any creature is it OK just to press ahead without further consideration? If biodynamics was just another agricultural technique perhaps we wouldn't worry our heads about this 'better mousetrap', but it isn't and I do.

In the discussions between the lectures this issue was raised and RS suggested both a panacea against abuse (moral development) and that this technique would be justified, especially in the future as it would have the potential to bridge humanity over the desperate times he could foresee.^{20, 21}

¹⁸ <http://www.soilandhealth.org/01aglibrary/01aglibwelcome.html>

¹⁹ This is supported by the discussion after lecture 4 when RS suggested the end of the year 1924.

²⁰ "Well, with regard to it being permissible, just imagine if it weren't. (I want to leave aside for a moment the ethical question, the issue of esoteric ethics.) What would happen in that case, as I have already indicated, is that agriculture in the civilised regions of the world would become worse and worse, and near-famine and high prices would cease to be isolated phenomena and become the general rule. This will happen in the not-too-distant future, so our only options are either to let civilisation go to ruin, or to try and do things in such a way that a new fertility can come about. Faced with this need,

I hope that I am sufficiently clear about my concerns for the justifiable use of peppering. One abuse is to be clever at making the peppers but be unscrupulous in their use, perhaps for personal gain. A lesser issue is to consider them as just a better mousetrap without considering whether one has gone far along the chain of cause and effect.

Other peppering methods and rationales

In Enzo Nastati's 20th lecture on the Koberwitz course he said:²²

"We have to admit, despite repeated attempts, that when we followed the indications in [lecture 6] we were not able to obtain an effective product. We are convinced that Steiner, in this instance, has given indications suited to the level of the listeners he was addressing, or that he has given indications with the aim of protecting the true and correct procedure because of the danger of indiscriminate dissemination of this knowledge²³. It is true that this could also be used to wreak very serious damage. We are convinced that when Steiner prepared a product against rabbits (as he did during the Koberwitz Course)²⁴ he used a different approach that we have also followed and which has proved very effective. Now we will follow the directions given by Steiner and then try to understand what we believe to be the 'real' instructions he protected....

We said that we have never managed to obtain good results with ash obtained as described by Steiner. Instead we achieved excellent results with another method, which produces what we could call 'planetary ashes'. The first difference between the two methods is the fact that the second, instead of using the skin, use the creature's most characteristic parts. For the mice the important parts are the face and front paws. Remember what we said about the manifestation of the animal kingdom which is made up of humans who anticipated the fall on our planet when conditions were still unsuitable for spiritual development, and have remained trapped in their forms by demons linked to particular impulses of the soul, so that each animal is a manifestation of a particular aspect of the human soul. However, to burn the most characteristic parts of the creature is equivalent to releasing those entities. To work in this way it is necessary to subject the spleen of the animal to incineration because the spleen is the bearer of the forces of Saturn. Because this is the outermost planet it contains within its orbit the whole solar system and is the door through which one can enter the world of the constellations.

What we are describing is the result of very detailed studies and it has not been done just for the sake of finding a new method or to avoid pedestrian repetition of the teachings of Steiner. Moreover, we draw attention to the fact that Steiner, during the Course of Koberwitz, intervened with the rabbit overpopulation that had become a real disaster in the area. However, he did not adhere to the guidelines set down in his own lecture. First, the area over which he wished to have an impact was well over 5,000 hectares and certainly Steiner did not travel all over the property to sprinkle the pepper. Also, during the period in which Steiner was in Koberwitz, Venus was not in front of the constellation of the Scorpion. The product that we provide contains the ashes to unleash the demons, but also our 'harmoniser' product to provide protection to those who use the product.

As far as the Zodiac is concerned we do not refer to the constellation of the Scorpion because this constellation is death in relation to reproduction. When acting at the planetary level it is necessary to use the constellation that resonates with the mice, not for the reproductive aspect but for its defining or essential peculiarities, and this is the constellation of Sagittarius. Even the use of the product on the field must be done when the constellation Sagittarius is active."

Enzo clearly feels that there are other methods based on the same basic approach and that

we don't really have the option of debating whether these things are permissible or not. Nevertheless, from a different point of view this question is quite valid..."

²¹ Enzo Nastati's commentary bypasses the issue of Venus in Scorpio and alludes to moral improvement in a different but related dynamic. See below for this discussion. However, see Enzo's 'Spiritual Astronomy' for more on the astronomical dynamics - www.moodie.biz/enzobooks.html.

²² Commentary on Dr Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course. Enzo Nastati. ISBN 978-0-9517890-6-3 . Incidentally this gives a second 'take' on the 'mechanism' of the peppers using the alchemical model of *Sal*, *Mercury*, and *Sulfur* with the attendant *Kali* and *Phosphorus* death process.

²³ "It is important to think about how to create some kind of safety valve against abuse. If these things become common knowledge, of course they could be abused." R Steiner Agriculture - discussions

²⁴ Not something with which everyone agrees. I would love to hear if there are corroborating witnesses to Trevor Ravenscroft's report. <http://considera.org/board/viewtopic.php?p=417#417>

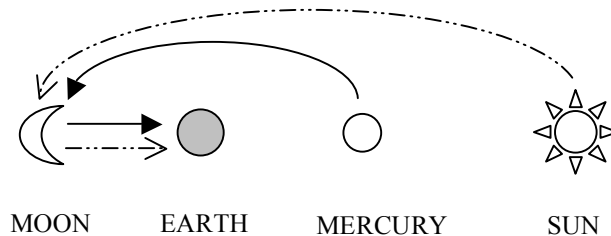
the one used by Steiner in the apocryphal rabbit test was not that suggested in lecture 6. Enzo feels that his variation has some inherent protection from abuse, because anyone who wishes to make such ‘planetary’ peppers has to identify both the planet and the constellation to which each vertebrate relates, and identify and burn the ‘characteristic’ parts. One will have to be as organized, thoughtful and determined as Enzo to go through that study. The added protection is his ‘Harmoniser’ product, which would need an essay in itself.

However, he does give some more suggestions for the insects:

“Usually the reference constellation for insects corresponds to the constellation in the sky at the time when it is most disruptive, which is usually Bull or Twins. One can make a more effective spray if the incineration takes place when both the Sun, the Moon, and the reference planet are passing through the reference constellation.”²⁵

For weeds Enzo says the following:

“Weeds are not incinerated only in accordance with the phases of the Moon, because they also are connected to the planet Mercury due to their speed of reproduction and regrowth. The sidereal Moon acts as a bridge to the forces that descend from the Zodiac, whilst the synodic Moon mirrors the forces of other planets. When the Moon is in opposition to Mercury it receives its forces and reflects them to the Earth. Similarly, the Moon brings the Sun’s forces to Earth for plant vigour.”



The planetary positions for incinerating weeds

The most favorable moment to incinerate the weeds is certainly one in which the Moon is in opposition to Mercury and is also "full".

The part of the weed that must be incinerated is the seed. By doing this we bring a message of death that stops the messages of greatest vitality (Moon full to the Sun) and reproductive capabilities (Mercury). To be precise we should say that the most effective time to make a weed pepper, so that they have maximum effectiveness, is two to three days before the full Moon.

Once one has incinerated the insects or their characteristic parts and then made the potency, one can add in the biodynamic preparations 501 and 502. 501 (horn silica) and 502 (yarrow) bring cosmic light to the soil, and these inhibit the forces of the Moon. Spraying this preparation after mowing or weeding makes dwarfed weeds and their re-emergence is reduced by 50%. Of course treatment should be repeated several times to get a successful result.”

Enzo offers one more peppering example in his publications on pests:

“Another specific example: the Colorado beetle also has Mercury as its reference planet (there are several generations per year) it has an exoskeleton, and it is related to ahrimanic Undines and over-winters in the soil. Normally, after laying eggs, insects complete their cycle and die. The fact that the adult Colorado beetle over-winters places it outside this natural laws and this characterizes it as an asuric insect²⁶. So any preparation must confront these asuric forces by aligning itself with the Christic forces. So we will use our preparation 508 made from clay²⁷.”

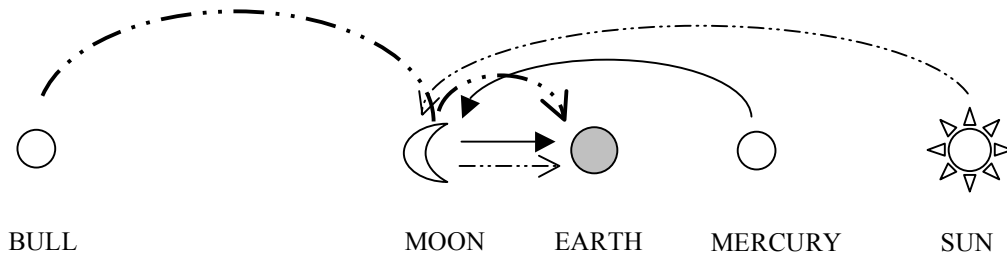
²⁵ ‘Understanding And Dealing With Pests: Introduction’ Enzo Nastati

²⁶ The asura are the third obstructive force which becomes manifest when the luciferic and ahrimanic forces work together. This is the strongest obstructive force and is very interested in the plant kingdom.

²⁷ Note that most biodynamic growers uses the designation ‘508’ for equisetum tea but the homeodynamic work uses this for the clay preparation. See the author’s ‘Commentary on Dr Rudolf Steiner’s Agriculture Course’ for more details.

The Colorado beetle usually attacks when the sky is the constellation of Taurus, and the animal that bears the forces that counters the ahrimanic Undines is the salmon.

The Colorado beetle must be burned with the Moon in Taurus and Mercury in opposition, and our 508 and salmon scales are added to this. But this is not enough given the asuric aspects so it is necessary to call upon the Christic healing forces and dynamising all this in alignment with the fishes-virgin axis, and then burying the preparation directed toward the constellation of the fishes.”



The planetary positions for incinerating Colorado Beetle

Various tips from Maria Thun

- We noted an increase in the effects when the ashes had been stirred for an hour prior to their application. Homoeopathic dilution to D8 (8X) is recommended for '*certain deterrent effects*'.
- Field mice skin, birds skin and feathers - Venus in Scorpio (Venus behind the Sun) (Steiner) and the moon is in Taurus (Thun)
- Insects - entire insect - Sun in Taurus (Entire insect world Sun passing through Aquarius, Pisces, Aries and Gemini on to Cancer. Feeble in Aquarius and Cancer) (Imago more towards Aquarius, larva more towards Cancer – Steiner in third discussion)
- Stable fly - Sun and Moon in Gemini
- Wax moth - Sun and Moon in Aries
- Cabbage fly, turnip gall weevil Colorado beetle, and Varroa Mite - Sun and Moon in Taurus
- Mole cricket - Sun in Taurus, Moon in Scorpio
- During longer nodal periods animal pests are more prevalent. In the case of Saturn these animal pests affect the roots; in the case of Jupiter the leafy region of the plant is most affected.
- Slugs and snails - Moon in Cancer

Plant or pest

Although this broad discussion of peppers necessitated touching upon the esoterica of biodynamics, their use does not demand this or any other understanding. Therefore, I maintain that peppering could be used with the same mindset as an insecticide - one that considers that the pest is the whole problem to be removed - and this brings us back to the slugs and the seedlings. One would hope that there is at least a lingering doubt in the minds of even the most chemically oriented growers, a small voice wondering if the slugs were just opportunistic and the seedlings were just unlucky, or whether there was something in the plants that made them susceptible to the slugs and enabled them to attack.

Was the suffering of the salad seedlings an early indication of the susceptibility or the result of the infestation of the slugs? If we are sure it is the latter then perhaps we are justified to put on our protective suit and mask and spray our poisons – though I would hope one

would observe oneself and the plants around to see if the only impact of the spray is that the slugs die. However, if we consider the pest to be symptomatic of the real malaise then we can begin to work our way down the chain of causality, away from the isolated physical problem to look at the context in which we found the issue arising, searching for a deeper cause.

Perhaps we will be lucky and we find some other physical problem for the seedlings – we’d forgotten to water them and they were stressed, or the area is water-logged because we dug through the water main, or the soil is lacking some limiting nutrient, or we have chopped the roots when we were hoeing the soil nearby, or we mulched with straw that contained aminopyralids from the local horse-riding stable. These give clear options for sorting out the problem by relieving the stress on the plants – mend the pipe, remove the mulch, address the soil deficiency - as appropriate. All these implicitly acknowledge that it was the plants that needed our attention and not the pest. If we found and addressed the underlying issue the slugs will not be able to cause havoc.

I like Glen Atkinson’s approach: he considers that reducing the fertility of the troublesome creatures with a pepper may or may not be effective. However, a better approach is to consider each pest as a symptom of problems in the underlying agricultural balance that can be addressed by judicious use of the biodynamic preparations. If one sorts out this underlying imbalance then the ‘pest’ will not be troublesome and will just be a few rabbits or a sprinkling of docks. By studying Popplebaum²⁸ and Eugen Kolisko’s zoological texts²⁹ Glen has made his preparations at certain times and potencies to ‘aim his shots’ at specific pests – such as one preparation he makes available against rabbits which provoked this testimonial:³⁰

“We sprayed at the beginning of the year and we have had no sign of rabbits and nothing eaten for the whole of the summer. We are surrounded by numerous rabbits but none have gone near the area sprayed. We only sprayed the once and it was end of March/beginning of April. Not sprayed since.”

To be clear, no peppers were used in making this preparation designed to deter rabbits. The preparation is a blend of carefully potentised biodynamic preparations. The inspiration is taken from the Agriculture lecture’s in which Dr Steiner talked about dealing with the nematode and the beet.³¹

Weeds and what they tell

So if the problematic creatures are not the cause of the problem what are they? I consider them to be indicators, symptoms, signposts for the underlying issue for those that know how to read them. Joseph Coccanouer shows that the weeds, far from being the problem, are part

²⁸ Man as Compendium of the Animal Kingdom by Dr. Hermann Popplebaum

²⁹ The Twelve Groups of Animals E. Kolisko

³⁰ <http://considera.org/materiamedicagricultura.html?remtype=2&rem=81>

³¹ <http://rimu.geek.nz/garuda/Agriculture/lec%206.pdf> Glen Atkinson: “The process of absorption which should actually reside in the region of the leaves has been pressed downwards and embraces the roots. The Cosmic forces in the atmosphere - the Cosmic Substance carrying Astrality - works too strongly into the soil. The nematode, an insect, lives and survives in this astrality, as we will see described in the next lecture. This passage is suggesting a different approach to insect control, than peppering, even though RS goes onto describe the burning of the insects as the solution. If the cosmic forces ‘working too strongly into the soil’ can be ‘pulled or pushed out’, then the environment that supports the nematode will no longer exist and therefore the nematode will die out. This is ultimately THE biodynamic solution to pests and disease, as it solves the problem, rather than removing the symptom, as peppering does. We are given a hint of this process earlier in lecture 5 when RS talks of using the Oak Bark preparation for fungal disorders. Research carried out by the Garuda Biodynamic Institute has proven that, by using the Biodynamic preparations as specific homeopathic compounds, this approach to pest control is possible. Trials carried out in conjunction with HortResearch NZ, showed a 50% reduction in high levels of bird damage on grapes. White Cabbage butterfly damaged has ceased due to similar compounds -”

of Nature's healing mechanism.³² Ehrenfried Pfeiffer³³ wrote 'Weeds and What They Tell' to try and instruct us what they can show us about our agricultural systems. In some cases, it would appear, they are dynamic accumulators of deficient nutrients, so Frankie van der Stok also makes a *guache*³⁴ of the weeds that are in a field so that the nutrients and other aspects of that plant can be supplied even though the plants themselves are being removed.

This respects the weeds as a manifestation of a problem, and whilst it is not always possible to let the weeds continue to take over the land in question one can learn the lessons they have for us and act on that information. This is a long way from considering the weeds to be the whole issue.

The farm organism

The preparations are one of the biodynamic variables with which one can try to establish balance in the farm organism.³⁵ It should be clear that this is not a static balance but a robust and self-correcting dynamic balance that is being sought. There are many such variables for every grower and some aspects, that we might call passive, that cannot be addressed very easily. The active or variable aspects include the varieties of plants, the manuring regime, the cultivation techniques and timing, the application of the preparations, the stock and stocking rate, the annual weather and so forth. In those 'passive' elements that are not within our power to change, we can include the basic climate, aspect, rainfall, prevailing winds, altitude, and the mother rock beneath our feet.

One can try to understand what those non-negotiable passive aspects of the farm require as a balance. One can use a musical analogy and assert that we need all the notes of the musical scale to achieve balance and resilience. However, our sandy soil only allows us to play a few notes of the scale. To address this we can go to a different octave – say the octave of manuring - and bring in some of the missing notes there. To be sure it is not the same as having a neutral loamy soil, but it mitigates the one-sidedness! So, if we have a sandy soil we would want to bring balance with the cooler manures from the pig and cow rather than encourage the inbuilt warmth with horse-muck based manures.³⁶ If we cannot do this at all or very well for some reason we can try and bring in the earthy and watery by emphasising the preparations between 500 and 503.

In order to do this we need to identify all the relevant octaves and what covers the range in each octave. I think the schema on the back page of this article gives a good point of departure for discussion and study.³⁷

In an ideal world every farm would be able to establish itself as a largely self-supporting organism into which the agricultural individuality could incarnate - that which is greater than the sum of its parts. In the same way that a person cannot bring forth their best when they are sick, a farm cannot fulfil its potential if it is unbalanced. Monocultures and land in extreme conditions do not have sufficient potential for homeostasis to be resilient in the face of the variables of the years. Such properties will only be productive sporadically or with the intensive inputs and pollutants that we have overwhelming evidence cannot be sustained. When a farm is balanced so that the vast majority of yields are the supply for another part of the farm and most supplies are available on site, then we can say the farm is healthy and balanced and disease will be resisted here better than anywhere else which does not have that

³² http://journeytoforever.org/farm_library/weeds/WeedsToC.html

³³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ehrenfried_Pfeiffer

³⁴ There is a list of such *guaches* or plant teas, macerates, decoctions and infusions with their uses at the back of the book 'Garden and Greenhouse Cultivation with the Homeodynamic Method' by Enzo Nastati – <http://www.moodie.biz.enzobooks.html>

³⁵ Indeed even for humans - <http://bdmax.co.nz/home/article/50>

³⁶ Steiner said that the vast majority of pests and diseases could be addressed with rational manuring. See, 'Fertilisation – Biological and Spiritual or Ways to Bring life to the Earth and Plants' by Enzo Nastati

³⁷ From '4 Aspects of the Agricultural Organism' by Enzo Nastati

core. As a point of prejudice, I am assuming that the balanced farm organism is the best possible deterrence against pests and weeds getting out of proportion.

Humans

There's an interesting octave in the schema which Enzo calls 'community'. That's us. Clearly we have a role to manage the land so that this healthy organism can establish itself and develop over time as it must. We have a role as farmers and growers to be on the ball enough to recognise those organs or octaves that need support and management, and to work out how to provide that support.

But I am interested in another aspect which concerns the individuals on the farm in a more direct way. In the first discussion on June 12, 1924 RS said this:

"A very ticklish question was raised, for example, by our friend Stegemann in the discussion in the Hall the other day, namely, whether pests could be combated by such means — by means of concentration or the like. There can be no question about it that you can, provided you did it in the right way. Notably you would want to choose the proper season - from the middle of January to the middle of February - when the earth unfolds the greatest forces, the forces that are most concentrated in the earth itself. Establish a kind of festival time, and practise certain concentrations during the season, and the effects might well be evident.

As I said, it is a ticklish question, but it can be answered positively along these lines. The only condition is that it must be done in harmony with Nature as a whole. You should be well aware that it makes all the difference whether you do an exercise of concentration in the winter-time or at midsummer."

There's no two ways about it: here, Steiner is saying that, at least in principle, one can deal with troublesome creatures with our thoughts! *"There can be no question about it that you can."* This is not taught in the agricultural colleges around here. It is abundantly clear to me that biodynamic agriculture as brought by Dr Steiner is at home in the alchemical world view, a basic tenet of which is that one cannot really change outside of oneself what one has not first changed within oneself. Nowadays one might say, *be the change you want to see*. There are reciprocal influences between the macrocosm and the microcosm and if we really want to get things right we need to take responsibility for what we can and have the right to change both within and without us. These meditations that might be done around Candlemas – what might they be? Would we be concentrating our hatred of the pests and sending that out like a mental laser to blitz the little beggars? No, we need to let our mind stop seething long enough to see the analogue of each pest or weed within ourselves. This recognition and a determination to make the changes within ourselves where we certainly have the right and responsibility to take control is the meditation. This means that we respect the 'pest' as a stimulus for our personal growth and then we can be thankful and help them to come back into alignment with their comfort too. One has to love ones inner slug!

Enzo has a booklet which suggests some meditations for a few different pests. It goes into some detail about how the inner and outer worlds align so this rather unfashionable and potentially ungrounded thesis can be made our own, and adopted or rejected freely. I think it's worth a read.³⁸

Summary

Having started with the external symptoms of unbalance that we call pests and weeds, and having considered how to make and understand peppers against them, we have gone a few layers lower to find possible causes for the manifestation and abundance of these creatures. This took us to the biodynamic preparations as remedies against one-sidedness and then on to other aspects of the land that we can use thoughtfully to address any passive imbalances in the fabric of the agricultural organism. Finally we have come back to ourselves as guardians of the land, and suggested that we look at ourselves to consider any imbalances within us as real factors in the provocation of pests and diseases. If we accept this we find that our responsibility lies in an area of our existence where we are able and right to respond.

³⁸ 'Understanding and Dealing with Pests – part II: Mediations', by Enzo Nastati

Mark Moodie April 2011

	SAL MERCURY SULFUR				
	EARTH	WATER	AIR	FIRE	
	C O M M U N I T Y				9
	SIDEREAL MOON AND STARS SYNODIC MOON AND PLANETS				8
	502 500	503 FLADEN	504	505 501	506 507 7
	FULL MOON	NEW MOON			6
	MULCHING NEAR WINTER CULTIVATION	IRRIGATION MANURING	HOEING	NEAR SUMMER CULTIVATION	5
	PIG	RUMINANTS		HORSE	4
	ANTS -	WORMS	INSECTS	BIRDS	3
	ROOTS FIBROUS TAP	HUMUS FRESH MATURE SOWING	WOODLANDS ORCHARDS HEDGES		2
	CLAY LIME SILICA	FROST DEW RAIN SNOW STAGNANT - FLOWING- MISTS	WIND LUMINOUS EAST	N - S - E - W ASPECTS	1

B I O D Y N A M I C
 O R G A N I C
 A N I M A L
 P L A N T
 P A S S I V E

Levels or octaves of the agricultural organism