

I Don't Believe It
My Journey to Biodynamics
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“You’ve really lived on this farm your whole life?” Harold, the newspaper reporter, asked me. Harold had driven out to Angelic Organics from Chicago early that morning to talk with me about our community supported agriculture program. We seemed pretty close to wrapping up the interview.

“Yup.”

We stood outside the farm shop. I leaned against the rear tire of my Farmall Super A. Its cultivating shovels were shiny from yesterday’s work in the broccoli field.

“And your family—they farmed here?”

“Dairy,” I replied. “I started milking when I was nine—that big barn there.” I gestured towards the barn next to us. “Now it’s the packing room.”

“Were they normal? I mean, was it a normal family?”

Uh-oh, he was settling in. This happens sometimes with reporters. They come out for a quick story, get sort of dreamy, and then they can’t seem to leave. Half of them end up buying a vegetable share.

“Yeah, we talked about the weather a lot. And the crops. And we gossiped about neighbors.”

An engine whined to the west of us. We gazed toward the vegetable fields. My orange pick-up crept towards the far corner of the farm where the crew was bunching kale. They were phantom-like in the morning mist. One crew member wore a yellow slicker.

“So how’d you ever get involved in Biodynamics?”

“I asked my homeopath if there was . . . no, that’s not exactly how it happened.”

Did I really want to tell this man my story? Today? I had sweet corn to cultivate; the Super A probably wouldn’t start. And the crew—did I tell them to pick the Red Russian Kale, or the Winterbor? That Red Russian should be inspected for aphids. And I wanted bigger bunches this time.

But the past, the seductive past—I could feel it enveloping me.

Harold looked at me expectantly. He was sitting on the front tire of the Super A.

“Okay, it didn’t really start with my homeopath. I used to own all this land. Up to that hill and beyond.” I gestured to the hill beyond my woodlot.

“I had 186 acres. I lost it—165 of it. By the time I was thirty-two, I was a half million dollars in debt. It was the early ’80s. I’d overexpanded, overspent, and commodity values and land values collapsed. I had to sell all the machinery, the crops, the livestock, and almost all the land.

“I had had tremendous vitality up until that time, Harold. Stamina. Enthusiasm. I liked getting up in the morning. I liked farming. I liked the situation I was in. It seemed impossible that my life could fall apart like that. I had been with all those fields my whole life. I had the deepest sense of eternity about them. They were part of me. It was incomprehensible that I had to sell them. It was like selling an arm. No, more like selling a child.

“Most of my friends at the time just completely bailed on me. That was just as bizarre as losing the land, maybe more so. I was sure I could completely count on these people for anything. They just disappeared.

“Two things I trusted completely to be there for me—the land and my friends—were gone from my life. I managed to hold on to a few acres of land and these buildings.” I gestured towards the cluster of white farm buildings that spread out before us.

The packing barn shielded us from the morning sun; vapor drifted lazily from its red roof.

“For two years after the sale, I could hardly get out of bed. I hardly recognized myself. Land gone. Friends gone. Money gone. Rashes over my body. I was terribly weakened.

“Just cleaning my house back then was the biggest struggle—just sweeping the floor. ‘This is a broom,’ I’d think to myself. ‘A broom sweeps the floor, but in order to sweep the floor, I’ll have to take hold of the broom with both hands. **How will I accomplish this huge task, of taking the broom with two hands and then pushing it about on the floor?’**”

“‘Who is this person?’ I would ask myself. I used to run a big farm. I rented hundreds of neighboring acres, raised corn, wheat, soybeans, hay. I raised hogs, cattle. I milked. I made things happen, kept things going. And there I was, sweeping the floor of my house—I was not sure I could do it. Perhaps I could sweep half of it now. Then take a little nap, and maybe then I would be able to sweep the other half.”

The orange truck started up again; we watched it glide across the end of the field.

“So there I lay—a wreck. For some reason it gradually dawned on me that I needed to go to Mexico. I’d been there ten years earlier, and I just started knowing that I was supposed to go there again. In Mexico there was something that I needed. It seemed impossible to get there, since at the time I barely had enough money to keep my lights turned on. But I somehow managed to borrow the money and go.”

The truck lumbered by us, headed for the packing room. Winterbor kale bobbed in the green crates, shimmering with dew. A yellow slicker teetered on the end gate. Harold sat in the damp grass and leaned back against the tractor tire. He had stopped taking notes.

“It’s not part of your story, is it?” I asked him.

“I just want to know how you got from there to here—it’s not going into the paper,” he said.

“I’ll tell you—I **went through a period there of hating the land, hating it.** It wasn’t the benevolent, nurturing, dependable thing I had imagined it to be. And that love stuff—that if you love something enough, it’ll reward you, it’ll pay you back. Baloney! Love the land all you want, and it might destroy you.”

“Still—that was nice kale that just drove by,” Harold quipped. “And it took more than sweeping a floor to grow it.”

“Okay, so I’m in Mexico, in the central highlands—San Miguel de Allende. In San Miguel, I got worse. It’s a Spanish Colonial town—all built of stone. Those huge stone buildings started to seem porous to me; I gradually began to perceive them as though they had no substance, like I could put my hand through them. And cars gliding down the cobblestone streets—they seemed like apparitions. I increasingly believed that walking in front of these cars posed no danger, that they would just pass through me without harm. Buildings and cars seemed like fluff.

“I tried to recall my days of a functional life, running a farm, having friends, liking the day. I could barely retrieve those days with my memory.

“One day, as I left a restaurant with my journal in hand, I ran into a man I barely knew. He asked how I was doing. Without thinking, I opened my journal and began reading it to him—in San Miguel back then, you could pretty much be like that with

someone you met on the street. This journal was such a fantastic spew of self deprecation, just filled with self-hatred, self-loathing.

“After a couple paragraphs, I stopped reading and commented, ‘I’m losing my mind. I don’t know who I am. I don’t understand anything anymore.’

“The man said he thought homeopathy would help me. I didn’t know much about homeopathy at the time, but there was something in the way he said the word that made me want to look into it. He said I should find a classical homeopath, one who closely followed Dr. Samuel Hahneman’s protocols. Hahneman was the founder of homeopathy—about two hundred years ago—he was French. But it must have been around in some form before that. I can’t imagine Hahneman just came up with it out of the blue; it’s quite an elaborate system.

“Anyway, I found a homeopath in San Miguel—not classical, but I was amazed there was one there at all.

“He interviewed me . . . well, I had a translator, someone I hardly knew. I just kind of grabbed this unsuspecting woman off the street because she was bilingual, and she sat there in the doctor’s office and translated all my miserable symptoms to the doctor. She seemed to get more and more paranoid as I described my condition in more detail; after that interview, she pretty much avoided me when I’d see her around town.

“The homeopath gave me potentized aurum—that’s homeopathic gold. Now here’s the amazing thing. Within twenty-four hours I was pretty much restored to my old self. I had my enthusiasm back. I was positive about life. I was bouncing down the street. It was just so incredible. And many good things happened to me on that day. I got dinner invitations from people I barely knew. Someone I had never seen before came up to me on the street and said, ‘I feel you can benefit from this’—it was some spiritual book, I don’t remember its name. All told, there were 5 great things that happened to me that day, more than seemed to have happened totally in the prior three years. I was beside myself with joy. I was restored. It was a miracle. “

The sun was poking over the barn. The orange truck bombed by us towards the fields, a hay rack clattering behind.

“You just ate some gold and then you were healed?” Harold asked.

“Homeopathic gold—very diluted. You don’t really take the gold substance. There’s some process by which the gold is diluted and agitated until what you are really getting is the energy or the imprint of the gold, not the substance itself.”

The reporter eyed me suspiciously.

“It’s very far out, I know,” I explained. “It’s hard for many people to accept. It makes a lot of people mad to even hear about it.

“Here’s the thing,” I added. “I had a direct experience of this power. I was dramatically transformed by this homeopathic substance. It happened to me. I didn’t read about it. I didn’t theorize about it. I had an intimate experience of it—there’s nothing more convincing to a person than a direct, personal experience.”

“It could have been the placebo effect,” Harold commented. “Sometimes people get well just because they want to.”

“It could have been that. But I’d been to about every kind of healer imaginable up to that time—gemstone, massage, psychic, reflexology, regular doctor. I gave myself over to them, and I didn’t get better. I did this homeopathic treatment and suddenly I was better. I didn’t feel any more or less open to homeopathy than I did to the other things.

“Thing is, I didn’t stay better. After a week or so, I started to revert to my old patterns—more rashes, more self hatred. It turned out that this homeopathic aurum was just training me, or training my emotional body how to fix itself. Within a few weeks, it had pretty much worn off. I went back to the homeopath, and he said that I might need to take it every month or so, until my emotional body gradually relearned how to uphold itself. He administered some more aurum. I had a similar reaction to the first time within a few hours—it just launched me back into my former state of positivity and gregariousness.”

“It still could have been the placebo effect,” the reporter commented.

“You think I’m a flake?” I asked him.

“Not really. I’m just a natural skeptic. If you were a flake, you wouldn’t be running this farm today. I just don’t like to start thinking that kind of stuff is possible.”

“Okay, placebo effect—could have been. It’s just that nothing else I did worked, whether I believed in it or not. But this did. Did I believe in this homeopathy when I went

to that doctor in Mexico? It just seemed like one more thing I was trying. *It* took hold; nothing else did. “

“Upon returning to the states, I located a classical homeopath in Madison. He had elaborate credentials—licensed M.D., licensed psychiatrist, and a certified acupuncturist. Homeopathy was his main interest. I think he had four years of training in classical homeopathy. He treated me for a few years, almost always recommending high potency doses of aurum.

“It was amazing to track the effects of this aurum. I would take it and in just a couple days, I would become euphoric. Well, it wasn’t always quite like that. Sometimes I would have a healing crisis first. Rashes. Tingling nerves. Anger. But that would quickly pass. Then life would seem glorious. I would feel all this love for people. I wouldn’t worry so much. I wouldn’t hate myself. In a few weeks the dramatic effects would subside.

“One day I asked the homeopath if there was a homeopathic system for farming. I commented that it seemed like there might be some remedies that could suppress weeds or bugs, or make the soil healthier. He said that there were farmers who practiced radionics, a method of manipulating subtle energies. They were quite ‘fringy,’ he informed me.

“Over a period of three or four years of homeopathic treatment, the influence of aurum began to stabilize within me. Even when I wasn’t under its direct influence, I was better, more positive, more healthy. I wasn’t restored to my former self, but I was about three-quarters restored. It seemed like it wasn’t going to finish the job for me. I figured I had to accomplish the rest of my healing some other way, but I was strong enough to finally do it on my own.

“Several years later, when I started up farming again, I took a radionics workshop after an Acres USA conference. The instructor of the workshop was a dowser and radionics practitioner; he could ‘see’ spiritual energies, locate underground streams, and negotiate with the weather gods.”

The reporter fidgeted. “You’re really losing me now. I don’t believe in this stuff.”

“Okay, I know, but you asked me how I came into Biodynamics, and you don’t have to believe in this stuff to hear me out.

“What I’m talking about is actually kind of mild for some of those Acres people. Just imagine going to this conference, hundreds of farmers from all over the country—not ex-hippies, most of them. If anything, I’d say they lean towards the redneck or right wing, many of them older. They stand around, discussing the merits of cosmic pipes and energy wheels in their drawls and twangs. They debate the intricacies of rain machines and free energy. **They lumber about the exhibition hall, muttering in farmer dialects, their big chunky hands swinging pendulums,** trying to figure out which product to buy or which booth to visit. I’d never been to this conference before; I just wandered around in a daze.

“So this guy—the instructor—was a retired blueberry farmer. He was very straight, very droll. But he had these spiritual powers, so he worked with them. I don’t want to go too far into it, because it’s not really the point of this story. But I have to go into this radionics a little to explain why we are a Biodynamic farm today. If you want to know a little more about radionics, you can read *Secrets of the Soil* by Peter Thomkins and Christopher Bird. Radionics has the premise that the spiritual ‘signature’ or energetic imprint of almost any substance can be duplicated and ‘broadcast’ through the ‘ether’ via radionic instruments. Ether—that’s the invisible force field of life. Our instructor taught us that the ‘signature’ of a car, a fertilizer, or a dog could be discerned and replicated with a radionics machine. These ‘signatures’ are expressed as mathematical rates. For instance, there is a mathematical signature for the liver, 17–29, or maybe that’s the left lobe of the liver, I don’t really remember.

“Coming at this from a little different direction, Vedic seers were supposed to be capable of discerning exact energy patterns of things and converting these perceptions into exact speech, hence their words would be identical to the things being described. Sanskrit derives from this refined level of perception, which is why it’s supposed to be such a perfect language. It’s supposed to emanate in its very structure the truths or vibrations of the underlying message it’s trying to convey—sort of a spiritual version of onomatopoeia.

“Anyway, some of the people in the workshop wanted our instructor to give them the radionic rates for the Biodynamic preps. They didn’t want to go to the trouble of making the preps and then stirring them and applying them. They just wanted to set their

machines to a rate and broadcast the Biodynamic influence to their farms. But the instructor warned that Biodynamic preps could not be duplicated radionically; their influences could only be achieved by going through the procedures outlined in the *Agriculture Course* by Rudolf Steiner.

“The instructor paused for a minute and got a faraway look on his face. ‘Rudolf Steiner was a great, great man,’ he told us solemnly. ‘His work cannot be emulated with radionics.’

“There was something about the way this chunky retired blueberry farmer intoned Rudolf Steiner—I just sort of bathed in the vibration of that name for a few moments. I didn’t even know who Steiner was at the time; I just knew in that moment he was part of my future.

“That’s how I came to Biodynamics.”

“Has it helped your farm as dramatically as you say aurum helped you?” Harold asked.

“It’s a gradual process,” I replied. “There all these crazy influences coming at the land today—radar, radio waves, chemical drift, toxic rain, stray voltage. They alter the resonance of the soil. The soil has to let go of these old patterns and acquire new ones. We apply the horn manure maybe twice in the fall and twice in the spring, sort of like the training that aurum provided me.”

“Biodynamics goes way beyond Hahneman’s homeopathy. It includes potentizing and working with energies, but it’s so vast. It takes into account the sky, the earth, the flowers, the birds, the orchard. Worms. Vegetables. Livestock. The manure from the livestock—totally important for building compost that’s sort of a celestial beacon. It covers everything a healthy farm can be, and it puts the whole thing together in a harmonious way.

“It’s wild, Harold. I don’t even know where to start talking about it. **It’s changed my thinking about the world, about farming, about everything.** And I’ve got to go cultivate.”

Harold stood up, stretched. “If you weren’t running a farm right now, I’d think you were a crackpot.” He smiled warmly.

I climbed onto the Super A. Its cold metal seat bounced reassuringly as I fidgeted with the controls. I liked this Harold who had somehow gotten an hour of my cultivating time.

“Read Steiner’s *Agriculture Course*. It’s the basis for Biodynamics. Seems like it just came off the top of his head.”

“I just might do that,” he answered. “But don’t expect me to believe in it.”

“You don’t have to believe in it for it to work. Like this tractor—it usually won’t start, and I don’t believe it will start this morning,” I answered, as, amazingly, the cultivating tractor sputtered to life.

I yelled above the tractor, “I didn’t expect this junky old tractor to start this morning either, but guess what . . .”

