

## Discussion Three 14th June, 1924.

**QUESTION:** Can the method suggested for dealing with the nematode be used for other vermin? Is it permissible to destroy plant and animal life over wide areas by this method? The method might be greatly abused. Surely a limit should be put, so that one man cannot spread destruction over the whole world!

**ANSWER:** If we disregard for the moment the ethical aspect, the occult ethical aspect of the subject, what would be the result of assuming that we were not justified in adopting such proceedings? It would be, as I have often pointed out, that our agriculture in the civilised parts of the world would go from bad to worse, and that periods of shortage and famine would arise and eventually become universal. Such a contingency is by no means impossible in the not very distant future, and we must therefore choose between these alternatives, either to let civilisation founder or to take steps to bring about a new fruitfulness to the earth. The necessity is such that really we have no right to ask whether things are allowable or not. But from another point of view the question is one that can be put. The point then would be to devise some sort of safety valve to ensure against any abuse. Once a method is universally adopted it can very easily be abused. It must therefore be borne in mind that in the history of civilisation there have been periods when such things were known and applied on the widest scale, and that it was possible to ensure that they were not abused by confining them to circles of serious and responsible workers. There was far greater abuse later in the days when these forces were not confined in this way but were universally active, as in some later periods of the civilisation of Atlantis, where such abuses led to great catastrophes. The custom of keeping such knowledge inside a narrow circle and not allowing it to become universal is certainly justified. But this can hardly be put into practice nowadays. Knowledge cannot be confined to small circles. The small circles immediately try to spread their knowledge. It was easy enough before printing was invented, and in times when the majority of people could not read. But today when a lecture is given even to the most exclusive circle, the question always arises of finding a stenographer. I do not like stenographers. One must put up with them, of course, but I would much rather they were not there.

On the other hand, have we not to reckon with another necessity, the necessity of a moral improvement of the whole of human life? This, of course, will be the universal remedy. It must be admitted however, that many contemporary phenomena give cause for pessimism. With regard to this moral improvement of life, merely to use the phrase is not enough; what is needed is a way of thinking informed by impulses of the will, and we ought to be prepared to do something concrete for this moral improvement. Such an impulse might very well come from Anthroposophy, for there would be no objection to forming a circle which would act as a sort of corrective against all the mischief that might arise. In Nature itself things which are good can turn out to be harmful. If, for example, the forces of the Moon were not working below we could not have them above. But they have to be there, they have to effect what in one sphere is highly desirable and in

A month after the Agriculture Course, Dr Steiner had more to say in reference to this question, during the 2nd lecture of the Curative Education course.

Whenever we give treatment to a backward child, we are *intervening in karma*. And it goes without saying, we must intervene in karma in this way. For there is such a thing as right intervention. Certain prejudices in these matters need to be overcome. How necessary that is, let me demonstrate to you from another example.

In the Agricultural Course at Koberwitz,\* at which one or two of those here were also present, I indicated guiding lines for agriculture. An elderly farmer attended the course, who is also an old member of the Society. Throughout the whole of the course he could not rid himself of a feeling of misgiving; it kept coming out in the discussions. Again and again he would say: "But if we do that, we shall be using occult means for practical ends; won't that be steering too close to the sphere of ethics? Could not these truths be applied also in a wrong way?" He was never able to get rid of this scruple; he was always suspicious of black magic in the application. Needless to say, these things do become black magic when they are not handled as they ought to be handled. And it was for this reason that I said once on that occasion quite explicitly: "A high standard of morality is absolutely essential in dealing with these matters; therefore I assume at the outset that those who attend this course attend it on purely ethical grounds, desirous only to serve humanity and help agriculture. The Agricultural Experimental Circle has accordingly to be regarded also as an ethical circle, which definitely sets itself the task of seeing that the truths are applied in the right and proper way." The Gods use magic, and the difference between white and black magic consists only in this: in white magic one intervenes in a moral, selfless way, and in black magic in an immoral, selfish way. There is no other difference. And so, in the nature of the case, since all *talk* about education of backward children is mere talk and leads to nothing, obviously this education can only be effective when it uses measures which are capable also of immoral application. And that brings us once again to the imperative need for a deep *sense of responsibility*.

If only, my dear friends, one could count upon a more serious sense of responsibility, one could at this time do a great deal. I must, however, frankly admit that silence has to be maintained today about many things, just because conscientiousness is not sufficiently developed. When people hear that this can be done, and that can be done—they want to do it! An eagerness to be doing something—that they have. But that is not enough. As soon as it comes to the doing of a real deed, and no mere continuation of some old impulse, as soon as it is a question of bringing in new impulses from the spiritual world—and that is what is needed, new impulses from the spiritual world!—then it becomes imperative to demand a high standard of conscientiousness and responsibility. And there is only one way in which these can be awakened in us, namely, that we have knowledge of what is really involved. Thus, we must know that in the education of backward children it is a matter of deep intervention in karmic activities which would otherwise come to fulfilment between death and the next birth. It is actually so: what is done by us now, intervenes in the work of the Gods which would otherwise be brought to fulfilment at a later time. If we are not satisfied for this to remain merely a piece of theoretical knowledge, if we are ready to let it work powerfully upon our minds and hearts, then we shall find ourselves continually faced with the alternative of doing what has to be done or of leaving it undone. Let us never forget that every step taken at the prompting of the spiritual world leads

another sphere harmful. What is moral on one plane is entirely immoral on another. The ahrimanic element in the earthly sphere is harmful only because it is in the earthly sphere. In a slightly higher sphere. Its influence is entirely beneficent.

With regard to the first part of the question it is quite true that the methods applied to the nematode can be applied to all vermin; to all lower animals whose characteristic it is that they have a ventral nervous system and not a dorsal one. **Where there is a spinal cord, one must use the skin; where there is a ventral cord the whole animal must be burned.**

**QUESTION: Did you refer to the wild chamomile?**

ANSWER: I meant the chamomile whose petals hang downwards - so (see Diag. 21). It is the *Chamomilla officinalis*, which grows by the wayside.

**QUESTION: Do you also take the flower of the stinging-nettle?**

ANSWER: Yes. You can take the leaves, and the whole plant when it is in flower, but not the roots.

**QUESTION: Can the Dog chamomile which grows in the fields be used?**

ANSWER: This species is more closely related to the right one than that grown in gardens.

The latter cannot be used. The species used for chamomile tea is far more akin to the right one and can also be used.

**QUESTION: Is the chamomile that grows on -the railway lines here the right kind?**

ANSWER: Yes, it is.

**QUESTION: Does what you say about the destruction of weeds also apply to water-weeds, e.g. water-thyme (or American duckweed)?**

ANSWER: Yes, it does. It applies to weeds growing in marshes and in water. The banks should be sprinkled with the "pepper".

**QUESTION: Can parasites living below the soil such as the cabbage club-root be combated with the same methods as are used for those that live above the soil?**

ANSWER: Certainly they can.

**QUESTION: Can the remedy for plant-diseases be used in the case of diseases of the vine?**

ANSWER: The matter has not been tested experimentally, I too have not tested it and little has been done by occult means, but I am convinced that the vine could have been safeguarded if one had proceeded as I have suggested.

**QUESTION: What about leaf blight? (Blattfaulkrankheit).**

ANSWER: It must be fought in the same way as any other kind of blight.

**QUESTION: Ought we, as Anthroposophists, to revive the culture of the vine?**

ANSWER: The function of Anthroposophy can in many respects be only to say what things are. The question of what they ought to be is today a very difficult one, I had a friend who was an Anthroposophist, an owner of large vineyards, and who devoted a large part of his yearly profits to sending all over the world postcards urging total abstinence. I had another friend who was a total abstainer and always very generous to the cause of Anthroposophy, but he was one of the people responsible for the placard we see in tram cars proclaiming "Drink Sternberg Cabinet" (a kind of champagne). In such cases, the practical question assumes a peculiar aspect. That is why I say: Take cow-horns and put them in the ground, but to fight bull-headedly against everything would surely only bring harm to Anthroposophy.

**QUESTION: Could not some substitute be found for the bladder of the stag?**

ANSWER: I agree that it may be difficult to come by stags' bladders, but how many things that are difficult are not done in the world. Naturally anyone can experiment and see whether a substitute can be found. I cannot say at the moment. There might be a species of animal, perhaps in limited areas in Australia, which could serve the purpose, but I cannot think of any animal indigenous to Europe that would do. One should not attempt to use

us into a situation where we have to look right and left, and make a new decision—and these decisions that are continually facing us have to be made with courage, with inner courage of life.

In ordinary life, man is protected from the necessity of this inner courage, for in ordinary life he can simply continue doing what he has been accustomed to do. He can jog on in conformity with the motives and standards that are so deeply rooted in him, taking for granted that these are correct, and feeling no necessity to adopt new ones. This answers quite well for the life that proceeds merely in the physical world. But when we come to working out of spiritual sources, we are inevitably confronted, daily and hourly, with decisions; in regard to each single action, we stand face to face with the possibility of either doing it or leaving it undone—or else maintaining an entirely neutral attitude. And the decisions require courage. This inner courage is the very first thing needed, if we want to accomplish anything in the domain of Curative Education. And it can be aroused in us if we hold continually before our minds the greatness of that which we have undertaken. We must be constantly thinking: "I am doing something which generally the Gods do in the life between death and new birth." The fact that you know this is of untold significance. Receive it as a meditation. To be able to *think* it, is most important.

anything except the bladder of some animal. I cannot recommend you to look for substitutes right at the beginning.

**QUESTION: In combating insects should the constellation be the same for all insects?**

ANSWER: That will have to be worked out experimentally. The Zodiac comes into play from Aquarius to Cancer as I have stated. Variations within the constellations will certainly have a significance for the different classes of lower animals. This calls for experiment.

**QUESTION: In what you said about the fight against the field mouse were you speaking of the astronomical Venus?**

ANSWER: Yes, what we call the evening Star.

**QUESTION: What is meant by "Venus in Scorpio"?**

ANSWER: 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).

**QUESTION: Does the burning of potato haulms have any influence on the growth of potatoes?**

ANSWER: The effect is so small that it is negligible. There is a certain influence, as indeed there always is not only on the individual plants, but on the whole field, when the refuse of anything organic is dealt with, but it need not come into our calculations.

**QUESTION: What do you mean by "Gekroese"?**

ANSWER: I mean the peritoneum (the thin serous membrane lining the internal surface of the abdomen and covering the viscera contained in it).

**QUESTION: How should the ash be distributed in the fields?**

ANSWER: I had meant to indicate that it could be scattered like pepper. The sphere of influence is so great that it is sufficient to walk through the field, scattering as one goes.

**QUESTION: Do these preparations also work on fruit-trees?**

ANSWER: In general they do. Additional points which have to be noticed in this connection will be mentioned tomorrow.

**QUESTION: It is usual in farming to give stable manure to turnips and the like. With regard to this specially prepared manure can it be used for cereals, or is a different preparation required?**

ANSWER: Such practices as are already followed can be retained. All you need do is to supplement them with the methods I have described. Other customary practices which I have not touched upon need not be condemned, nor need one try to reform everything. If they have proved their value they should be retained, and the new methods added to them. Of the latter I should like to say that they will not work nearly so powerfully if sheep or pig manure is used.

**QUESTION: What if one uses inorganic manure?**

ANSWER: It will be found that the use of mineral manure must cease altogether in time. The produce grown in fields that have been treated with mineral manure eventually loses, its nutritive value. This is the universal law. The methods I have indicated will make it necessary for us to manure our fields more frequently than once in every three years - perhaps even once in every four to six years would be sufficient. We shall be able to dispense completely with artificial manure. If only for reasons of economy we shall do without it.

We tend nowadays to judge things after too short periods of trial. I heard recently of a bee fancier who advocated the artificial rearing of Queen-bees, so that instead of breeding them oneself in the single hives, they can be bought over the counter. You may be right, I said, for the moment, but in thirty or forty years bee culture will have been completely destroyed. We should watch these things carefully. Everything is being mechanised and mineralised nowadays, but the fact re-mains that minerals should only be allowed to work as they do in Nature. Unless it is incorporated in something else you should not put anything completely lifeless, like a mineral, into the earth. This counsel may not bear fruit at once, but in the end it will be found to be right.

**QUESTION: How should insects be caught? Can they be used in the larval state?**

ANSWER: Both larvae and winged insects can be used. It may be that a slightly different constellation will be required. When one passes from the winged insect to the larva, the constellation is moved from Aquarius towards Cancer. The complete insect will be nearer to Aquarius.