

# The Problem of the Etheric Formative Forces

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## Introduction

There appears to be quite a divergence of views around the understanding, place and importance of the Etheric Formative Forces (EFF), within the various Biodynamic theologies that exist around the BD world. Some, place them as central to the BD explanation of nature, while others have them as just one part of a more complex worldview. Most worrying though, is that there is no obvious conversation afoot to finally resolve this discrepancy. I have made a few attempts at this topic, which meant looking into a worldview somewhat different to the one I have pursued for 30 or so years. Firstly, I had to 'find someone else's shoes, so I could walk in them for a mile', to see 'the problem'. This took awhile. Here is the latest perspective to this urgent issue. I say urgent because, who should take us seriously when we have such a huge divergence of views, in our basic theology.

While small differences of interpretation has to be expected in any movement, rarely would a movement be faced with such a divergence of 'worldview' as presented between what was put forward by Dr Wachsmuth (GW) in the 1924 book "The Etheric Formative Forces, in Cosmos, Earth and Man", and that put forward by Dr Lievegoed in 1951, as 'The Working of the Planets in the Life Processes in Man and Earth'.

GW describes a 3 fold world, dominated by the 'formative' Etheric, while Lievegoed expresses the story told within Steiner's medical lectures, which has the Spirit being dominant and formative, while the other three 'bodies' fall into line below it. In this fourfold view, The Etheric is a 'watery blob' of growth activity, that is moulded and formed by the Spirit and Astral from above, and physical processes from below. For GW the Etheric alone contains all that is needed to be doing all the forming of nature, we see. He has no need for the astrality in plant growth, as the Etheric contains all that is needed. On page 105 we find "As in the case of the human organism, so also in that of the living earth organism, it is the "ether body" which calls the phenomena of life into existence and which regulates and metamorphoses them. "

Between Lievegoed and Wachsmuth there are other commentators who express variations on both themes.

Between the writing of this article in 2014 and now – June 2020, I have done a study of what RS said about plant growth. This is available as "Dr Steiner's Plant Growth Story" at my website. It became clear in that study, RS describes plant growth in seven different ways, with three stories in particular being most important in this discussion.

In "Cosmic Workings in Earth and Man," Lecture 5 31 October 1923 ( <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/Dates/19231031p01.html> ) he describes the plant moving through the seasons, in a language based upon the processes called Wood Sap, Life Sap, and Cambium.

A week later in "Man as Symphony of the Creative Word" - Lecture 7, 2nd November, 1923 ( <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/Dates/19231102p01.html> ) we have a description of plant growth given in the light of the way the Elemental Beings working with the Ethers, as they move in and out of the Earth, through the seasons. This is the lecture series that provides reference for the modern Etherites.

We then have the "Agriculture Course" and especially Lecture 2 given on the 10 June 1924 ( <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/Dates/19240610p01.html> ) and Lecture 8 16 June 1924 ( <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/Dates/19240616p02.html> ). These lectures provide a lot of information about the Physical Formative Forces working through the seasons.

These are three distinct languages describing the same thing. Within the Agriculture Course there is only one direct reference to 'The Ethers', as this is a series talking of the Cosmic and Earthly activities, not the Ethers. Which means **it is virtually impossible for the 'Etherites' to understand the Agriculture Course, with their reference system.** There are correspondences between the stories but they are not directly interchangeable.

## The Cosmic Ether

From my investigations it appears the crux of the matter, is what the words 'Cosmic Ether' are representing, and what happens once this is clarified, or not.

The 'problem' starts with Dr Steiner. Within his usage, the Cosmic Ether is a compound image of 'all that comes from above' towards the Earth, while 'the incarnated body of growth forces' is often called the Etheric Body. However he did not always make this clear distinction. These two terms can seem interchangeable, to some, however they are very different. If RS used the term 'Cosmic Forces', as he did elsewhere, instead of 'Cosmic Ether' he would have saved us many problems.

Bochenmuhl offers some clarification in 1977. *"The illuminating power of thought becomes for us a picture of a unifying activity coming from the periphery of the world, an activity which would resolve all separate entities of the sense world into the unity of the cosmos, an activity with which we feel ourselves to be inwardly related. This is the picture that RS repeatedly used to describe the activity of the 'cosmos', the 'etheric', or the 'world ether' (6). In itself - undifferentiated - the etheric can not be grasped by us. Yet, when we look at the world, our inner capacity of illumination is always differentiated in some way. Thus the etheric cosmos appears differentiated to us. The etheric acquires its form and completion from a super ordained realm, the astral (7) . Each concept , as the source of a specific illumination, highlights a particular aspect of the world and comes from particular direction of the universe. (11)*

Poppelbaum makes a similar comment later in the same book "

*"Focusing on a single part of the human being, such as the etheric body, is always problematic because each part interacts with others. Thus, we cannot strictly limit ourselves to our theme, but must to some extent also include the neighboring parts.*

*Even in the plant, which anthroposophically oriented spiritual science describes as twofold (consisting of a physical and an etheric body), it is not possible to describe the etheric body in isolation. One must elucidate how its activities counteract those of the physical body, how it raises the substance of the plant out of the context of the inorganic and keeps it from sinking back into the realm of the purely physical until the moment of death.*

*One must also, however, relate the etheric body of the plant to a higher realm. Those forces which Rudolf Steiner describes as "astral" which come from the periphery and transform mere vitality into sentience—they too express themselves within the etheric body of the plant. They modify and direct the phases of its activity, and they specialize its forms.*

*RS once contrasted the etheric body and the astral body as the 'functional' and the 'functioning' and then defined the ego as the 'pulsating' with in the 'functioning'. Descriptions of anything 'functional' must always be incomplete because they omit the 'functioning' agent. For this reason descriptions of the etheric body in isolation suffer from a kind of anonymity. To be really complete, a spiritual scientific account must always be pursued to the agent whose activity underlies the phenomena." (12)*

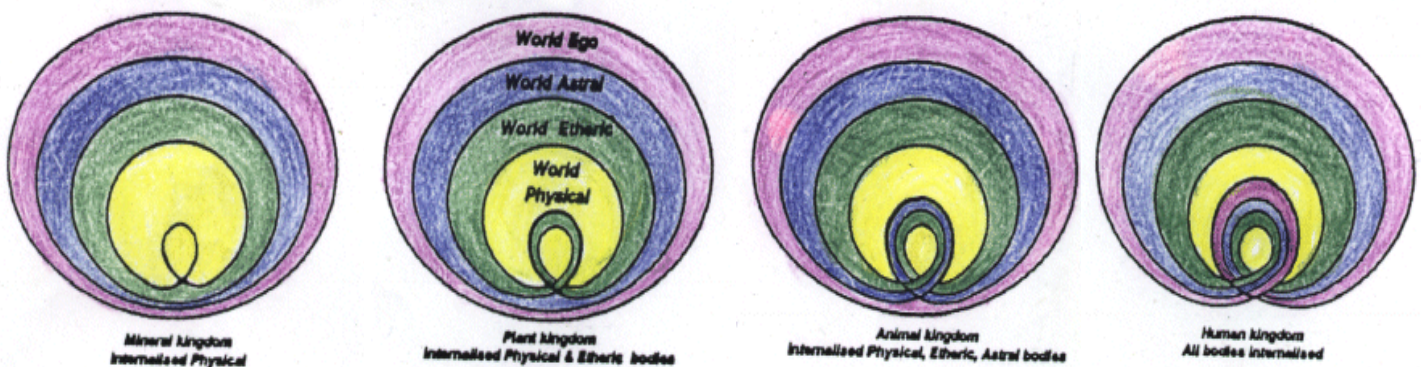
RS offered some clarification of the Cosmic Ether in the medical lectures of 1920, when in lecture 3 he says " *Anyone who can observe Nature objectively knows that only by this line of inquiry can we arrive at a sound conception of the link between physical and spiritual in man. For the forces we learnt to know as plastic formative forces (Cosmic Ether) which mould forms straight from the living substance, are simply lifted out of the organs, and exist entirely in the soul and spiritual functions.*

*Because they have been so lifted, and are no longer within the organs as formative forces, man has them as separate forces, in the functions of soul and spirit. If I think or feel, I think and feel by virtue of the same forces that work plastically in the lower animals or the vegetable world..... Anyone wishing to be a sound psychologist, whose statements have substance, and not mere words, as is usual today, would have so to follow up the processes of thinking, feeling and willing, as to show that the very same activities in the regions of soul and spirit manifest themselves on the lower level as plastic formative*

forces.”

Summarising these comments I get, that ALL the astronomical activities, Stars, Planets and Earth magnetic activities come to Earth, as the Cosmic Ether. They enter the Earth, and are then reflected back through the kingdoms of nature. Therefore all three ‘above’ activities, and the physical from below, work in the internal physical and etheric activities of the plant kingdom. In animals and humans, the activities of the planets and stars, contained within the World Ether, are lifted further and used by the Astral body and Spirit, we find incarnated in those kingdoms. In plants these ‘activities from above’ not only work internally through their etheric (ethers) and physical (PFF) carriers, but also directly from the outside. We also need to remember that all 120 chemical elements are also carriers of the four astronomical activities into the mineral sphere, and these can be called the mineral formative forces. (9)

Each kingdom of nature incarnates an extra astronomical sphere. Our experience in life is made up of the interplay between the World and the Internal activities.



The problem for Biodynamics, (BD) is that because only two parts of ‘our game’ are being internalised in plants, the ‘undifferentiated Cosmic Ether’ sections of BD conclude, a) the Cosmic Ether and Internal etheric are essentially of the same nature, and (b) only the etheric acts upon the physical. While there are RS quotes that appear to support these conclusion, subsequent generations have made efforts to clarify this concept.

### Formative Forces

The use of words ‘Formative Force’ also needs some clarification. It seems these terms are used fairly loosely throughout the RS literature. My preferred usage would be ‘Formative Forces’ (FF) to only mean the primary forces coming from the stars that set the species patterning of any particular entity. However given the wide spread usage of these words in many other contexts, they appear to mean anything that has any influence upon any other activity. Hence we need to identify Spirit FF, Astral FF, Etheric FF, Physical FF and Mineral FF kingdom within the BD story.

### The Two Paths

Dr Wachsmuth’s 1924 book set the world view of the small BD movement, however it appears it was in 1951 that some clarification was bought to the Biodynamic world view from the Anthroposophical medical community.

### Dr Lievegoed

The Dutch medical doctor, Dr Lievegoed presented his lecture to the ‘Experimental Circle’ – the Apop Ag in crowd, and in the first paragraph of this book he says “ *In every living organism Physical, Ethereal, Astral and Spiritual forces are active. In the plant, the Physical and Ethereal forces work from within outwards, the Astral forces work around it, and the spiritual forces from the starry distance, are where the archetypes of the plants are formed*”

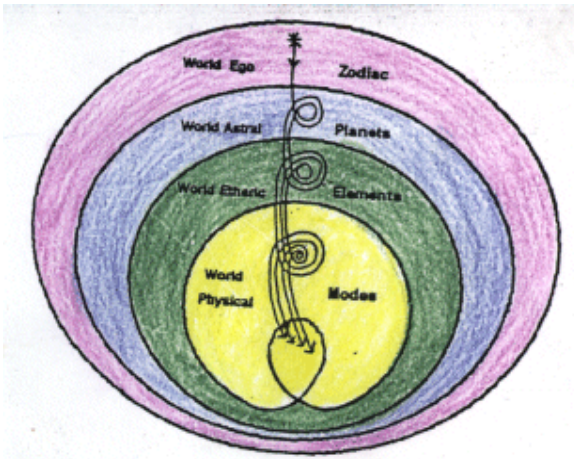
He then adds “*The effects of the Etheric Formative Forces are always general ones. Never does an organism come into existence merely through the Ethereal processes, but only when an Astral principle presses its seal upon the Ethereal*”

“ *The working of the Astral principle is carried into this Physical-Ethereal, as a streaming, moving*

activity. Manifesting archetypally in a sevenfoldness"

"The Spiritually working principles gather together the form into a specific species and are archetypally arranged according to the 12 principles, revealing themselves cosmically in the Zodiac. It is only through this spiritual element that 'the plant' becomes a rose or a sage, 'the animal', a lion, and 'man a definite individuality."

"In the plant the seed is the carrier, or point of attachment, of the Spiritual forces forming the species. But the seed only unfolds when surrounded by Physical, Ethereal and Astral elements in such a way that these forces can stream freely together."



The medical understanding is, the star related spirit activity, are the primary formative forces that use the moving activities of the astral planets, to mould the growth forces found within the atmosphere of the Earth, in their picking up of the Earthly substances. Any formative activity of the lower bodies, is given to them, by the higher bodies.

Lievegoed's book then goes on to outline the 'Astral Formative Forces'. Even today, although Lievegoed's book is known of, there are very few people who have taken it to heart, and work with his suggestions. Enzo Nastati has made a contribution to this study, especially with his suggestions of how the other energetic activities work in

response to the astral formative forces.

An important part of Lievegoed's contribution was the presentation of the double planetary processes, outlining the incarnating and exarnating path of the formative processes. This provides the first step to understanding several confusing comments about the planets found in the Agriculture Course. These 'planetary indications' can then be used to understand the comments RS makes about the Cosmic and Earthly, Physical Formative Forces.

### Dr Guenther Wachsmuth

Dr Wachsmuth (GW) was a young student of RS, and is a central personality in the huge rift that beset the Anthroposophical Society after RS death. In this rift most of RS closest associates — Dr Vreede, Wegman, Kolisko, Hauschka, Pfeiffer and others - were purged from the society. This left Wachsmuth as the head of the Natural Science section and not inclined to listen to the council of these other close associates of RS.

His work is based upon the idea of the Cosmic Ether. We should note RS still talked of the Cosmic Ether in the early chapters of his last book with Dr Wegman 'Fundamentals of Therapy'.

GW does not make the distinction mentioned earlier. He did identify the Spirit as being different to the Etheric, but determined they were inseparable. He puts forward an overview of a threefold image, of Spirit, Etheric and Physical, which he eventually corresponds to the Christian threefold image of Spirit, Soul and Body. It is probably fair to say he joined up the astral and etheric activities as one thing.

In his book, GW puts forward an image of 'nature' in its broadest sense, as an image of four activities that exist purely within the 'Etheric'. He presents 'the Etheric' as containing the primary 'formative principle' or archetypal plan upon which any life form will develop. It works via four processes, called Warmth, Light, Chemical and Life ethers. This conglomerate activity not only has the plan of any life form or part there of, but also includes the growth forces, commonly associated with the etheric activity. This 'idea' is shared with eastern philosophies, which describe 'Chi', in a similar manner. The upshot of this 'world view' is that he makes no reference to the activities of the astrality, when talking of plants.

When he did talk of the astrality, this was only with regards to animals and humans, and then as secondary manifestation that appears in these kingdoms of nature, as consciousness, but NOT as a moulding influence. For this is done only within the Etheric. On pg 38 we find " *What in given instances causes the metamorphosis from one state to another? The etheric primal forces. In so far as they are*

*united with bodies of the phenomenal world, these bodies continue in that state induced by them, until such a time as free etheric forces of another sort, or stronger ones of the same sort, bring about a metamorphosis of the existing state.” ( In the Lievegoed story this ‘ metamorphosing movement’ is achieved by the astrality)*

GW talks of the spirit (pg 32) as a ‘primary will’, finding its source as *“the impulses from spiritual entities”* and *“the ultimate cause of all motion”*, which is a common Apop view. He states the spirit is primary, and exists before and after substance, however he sums up his view as *“ the forces working in this world, the forces of the etheric and of the spirit therewith united”*. *“The etheric formative forces, are inseparably linked up with the spiritual”*. Herein lies the issue, GW compounds the spirit into the etheric, thus rendering the Spirit irrelevant.

Dr Steiner was the first person to define the existence of the ethers. GW book was no doubt a landmark work, as he enlarged on RS perception that the four ethers are separate from the four elements. The four elements, and their humours, had been the dominant ‘material’ philosophical and medical references, since the Greeks. Whether RS determined them to beyond EM, I am still not sure. He did however open a doorway for the potential of ‘something other’ than electro magnetic matter having formative abilities, through the concept of spiritual beings ie creator Gods, being the ultimate creative forces. A point often left unclarified, is that the beings RS refers to are of the planetary spheres, and are thus astral entities, while RS evolution story is of our Solar System, and not of all of creation. Thus RS’s story, takes place within an existing ordered electro magnetic creation. However the ‘etheric’ is seen, by some, as something ‘other’.

GW’s process for proving his assumptions was ‘hypothetical association’. He would describe electro magnetic (EM) phenomena and then offer a possible alternative story of how these phenomena could appear according to his Ethers, while denying EM and the Gyroscopic Torusian being it is developed from, has any formative potential of its own. The Chladni forms and more latterly Cymatics, have been cited as proof of etheric formative forces, even though both of these are expressions of certain EM frequencies played to either metal plates with sand, or onto a oily water. All this proves is manifestation occurs according the EM frequencies, not something they say stands behind EM.

His threefold approach, to Biodynamics, finds a ‘cornerstone’ reference within the Agriculture lectures. In the second lecture RS introduces the threefold image of ‘the Agricultural Individuality’. This provides a correspondence of the nerve sense system of the human being associated with the soil and the roots of the plant, the Rhythmic system to the leaves area of the plant, and the chest of the human, while the metabolic system of humans is associated to the flowers and seed area of the plant. By association, this threefold of the physical form, is related to GW’s three dominate ‘bodies’, spirit, etheric and physical. However as it is considered the spirit has very little to do with plants, his story develops, especially for later generations, around only a two fold image of physical and etheric activities, which does eventually also contain a middle in between them.

It should be noted that the rest of lecture two and large sections of the rest of the course show the threefold physical image, is only the physical shell within which the many other ‘formative’ activities work.

I wonder how much GW was attempting to ‘fit into’ the growing Quantum Physics worldview popular in Germany at the time. It has electro magnetism and the quantum realm, which is ‘something other’ than EM.

## **Differentiation**

The cornerstone issue in solving this confusion, is the need to make further differentiation of a compound activity one perceives, when using Goethean observation of the forces coming from above.

The very first statement RS made in the Ag lectures was, ‘for us to grow a cabbage, we need to look to the heavens, as everything below is a image of what is above’. As a young astrologer this statement had real meaning to me and became the basis for my own search.

Being an astrologer of some 40 years now, I can say that Rudolf Steiner, and most Anthroposophists, are NOT competent astrologers. During much of RS life he was quite vague about many of his

statements, around the planets and the stars, often treating them as being very similar, and calling them both astral. However astronomy is very clear that there is a distinct difference between stars and planets. Stars generate immense forces, constantly over a long period of time, while planets are firstly ONLY in existence because of the energetic activity of the star they surround, and secondly they are ONLY compost heaps of the 'garbage' emitted from the star. Just as the human astral body is a result of the internalised spirits activity throughout our many lives, so a planet is a secondary manifestation of the activity of a star. Thus we have a very clear distinction that Stars are Spirit forces, that act as the real archetypal energetically formative force of creation, while planets are their 'astral' inferiors, who do the Stars bidding. As for the etheric activities, we ONLY find these as growth forces here on Earth, within our atmospheric sheath. We then have the Earth itself. These are astronomical facts that provide us with a clear image of these four activities and Lievegoed and the Apop medical activity know this. The Cosmic Ether is a composite of Star, Planetary and Atmospheric activity that has to be broken apart to be appreciated correctly.

### World Etheric

The Lievegoed / 'Apop medical' view allows for the clarification of the World Etheric. RS made comment in his last Whitsuntide lecture, that *'the etheric realm ends when the blue sky finishes'*, (7) which places the World Etheric sphere from the Earth to the edge of our atmosphere. In Fundamentals of Therapy (pg 22) he says *"The forces radiating outward are the Earthly ones, those radiating inwards (etheric) are those of the cosmic circumference about the Earth: in the astral, something is present of a higher order than these two kinds of forces"*. Konig (2) made an effort to define four bands of activity above the stratosphere, between 45 kms and 400kms. The image of the World Etheric is that the cosmic forces of the planets and stars, move through these four bands and thereby activate what we experience as World warmth, light, chemical and life activities. These activities are then carried into the Earth on the Spirits energetic train, and are reflected back outwards through lifeforms as the internal etheric body, where we can identify the Internal ethers.

Other references such as the oxygen, being liberated by life processes, and residing in the atmosphere, acting as the carrier of the growth forces, and the Schumann resonance of the Earths magnetic field, being the same as that of life's bio energy, all point to this astronomical sphere being the World Etheric organism.

### Internal Etheric



It is quite right to identify a downward moving etheric stream, but we also find the internal etheric activity coming back from the Earth, as an outward moving expanding and enlarging catabolic process.

The internal etheric is experienced as coming from below, as a companion of the physical forces. When it is stimulated things become larger, and the astrality is pushed off. As an example of this I can offer the accompanying experiment. These three plants were planted at the same time from the same punnet. A and B were sprayed with a Etheric stimulant, while C was sprayed with a astral stimulant. After a few weeks A was again sprayed with the etheric stimulant and B and C with the astral stimulant. (A) did not flower for three seasons. Hence the astrality was pushed off. The role of the

Spirit is easily left out of this story, and is best described within the language of the second lecture, as the archetypal species impulse, coming from the Stars and joining the plant through the seed chaos event at pollination.

### The Problem

When the Cosmic Ether is not differentiated from the World and Internal Etheric, and they are seen as one thing, the view of creation develops as an expression of two poles, the Cosmic Ether and the

Physical Matter. The above and the below. This is ok when we look at the Earth itself , however for plants onwards we need to clarify the difference between the Cosmic Ether and the internalised Ethers. There is quite a lot of authoritative documentation provided since RS, on the internal ethers, showing they are a direct expression of the four astronomical activities (5,6) manifesting within in the internal etheric body, however very little addresses the role of the astrality and spirit activities.

When the above becomes the Formative Cosmic, and the Physical becomes the Earthly processes, very vague ideas of the role of the Astrality and Spirit, influences on plant growth, have to result, as there is no need for them. The parts of the course that do not fit this model are generally then 'set aside' as incomprehensible, and a twofold view of BD is set in stone, with 'RS being wrong about a few things'.

## **The Champions of each Path**

### **Lievegoed followers**

#### **E. Marti - The Four Ethers**

A serious questioning of GW came in 1974 when Ernst Marti made a very open challenge in 'The Four Ethers'. Here he questioned GW's clumping together of the 'Formative Force', with the activity of the etheric and the ethers. This challenge did elicit a response from Wachsmuth, that was written off by Marti, as containing nothing of any consequence. This same statement was later repeated by others, within the pages of the "**Schiller Files**", published in 2000.

Marti's story has an interesting take on things. He is clear the Spirit brings archetypal formative influences from above, and then sees two separate paths of activity via the Elements and the Ethers, which have a polar relationship to each other, as voiced by other authors. (6) One thing to observe is he has a stage of creation he calls 'Formative Forces' below the Ethers, which is not further defined. I hope he is talking of the 'Physical Formative Forces' RS mentions in lecture in 2 and 8 , that stand below the ethers and behind the substances we see. He does not explore the role of the astrality as a moulding activity, however makes reference to the planets as creative influences. His descriptions of the Ethers activity are very similar to what we find described by Lievegoed for the planets, which further diminishes the Ethers as having much independence of formative action, and are simply the carriers of what comes from the Astrality above them. Marti also has the habit of describing the EM phenomena of Light for example, and then declaring it to be that of the Ether, that defies EM laws. This book could do with some further critique, but it is not high on my list of things to do.

It is suggested there was to be a second part to his book , which has not appeared in English.

#### **Bockemuhl and Poppelbaum**

In the 1977 edition of the Bockemuhl edited ' Toward a Phenomenology of the Etheric World", both Bockemuhl and Poppelbaum (who wrote a contemporary 'etheric' book to GW's in the 1920s) say that they made mistakes in the earlier publication, and that the astrality plays a much more significant role in plant formation than they first acknowledged. Poppelbaum makes some effort to clarify that the etheric can not act alone and "*to be really complete a spiritual science account must always be pursued to the agent whose activity underlies the phenomena.*" ( pg 218) , which is the original astronomical activity. While these authors acknowledge the role of the astrality and spirit, there is no effort made to show their influence, and hence one is left with a feeling very similar to reading Wachsmuth, that its all about the Etheric.

The various authors in this book, pursue the ethers as an exercise in perception, rather than emphasising their use for the practical farmer. Perceiving correctly is a very important part of Biodynamics, however this diversion by Bochenmuhl into such a focus on the perception of the ethers, over the perception of the Astral and Physical FF, or the practical applications of the whole Agriculture Course, has opened the doorway for the Natural Science section, in Dornach, to take its recent step towards 'social policy', as THE focus of Biodynamics. This is one more step further from the real message of the course. What is Cosmic and what is Earthly, and how are they controlled.

Menzo de Boam ( who studied with Bockemuhl for 4 years ) comments, at Dornach he did not hear any

mention of Wachsmuth, used as a reference. So what has happened since the 80s?

**W Pelikan**, the long time head of the Weleda pharmaceutical company, wrote a introduction to his "Healing Plants" that mirrors Lievegoed's view, while not directly commenting on GW. He described the plant effects as direct expressions of the primary energetic activities, rather than referring to the ethers, as suggested by Poppelbaum. (8)

**E. Pfeiffer**, a favourite student of RS, talks in the Schiller files of his great conflict with Wachsmuth, and how he would not return to Europe, as the inevitable tension would be too distracting. Menzo offers that Pfeiffer was coming from the four body side of this discussion and we can assume their 'great conflict' was over this very topic.

RS practical suggestions, throughout the course are for the control of both the World and the Internal groups of four activities. The 'big bodies' can be controlled via the use of the preparations, while the physical internal processes can be controlled by particular feeds given to animals or via the four substances outlined in the second lecture, clay, sand, humus and cations. Further, they are controlled by the chemical elements.

The reality of the 'big' forces working into each others sphere, is explored deeply within the medical sphere, however it seems to have been completely overlooked within Biodynamics, in recent years.

### Wachsmuth followers

From what I can see, the continuing focus upon the Ethers, is due to the lecture given in "**Man as Symphony of the Creative Word**" - **Lecture 7, 2nd November, 1923**. Here RS describes the movement of the Etheric Forces through the seasons, facilitated by the Elemental Beings. It is a wonderful story, and it does need to be incorporated into the other RS plant growth stories. It does not exist alone. I have attempted a summary of this lecture, in this diagram. It is an important diagram, and has been at the centre of some peoples BD conversations, for a long time. GW Schmidt and E Nastati use variants of it, in their discussions. The core of the message is that the 4 Ethers have different rhythms, of when they function more strongly above the Earth, before receding again for a period within the Earth. When they are above the Earth they function more strongly as part of plant growth. This picture is my interpretation of the text, and my experience of how these activities work in Nature. This varies from the way both Schmidt and Nastati interpret the story.



### GW Schmidt

In his 1995 article 'Methods of Seed Regeneration' (15), GW develops upon the work of his father Martin (1975). He says 'G.W. Schmidt's strategy for generating cereal seed material is based on making targeted use of the etheric forces as outlined by Rudolf Steiner.'

*Anthroposophy posits that, for healthy growth, plants need not only the conventional media such as soil, light, water, nutrients and a favourable climate, but also some finer emanations, the so-called etheric formative forces. Steiner describes the four etheric forces, namely Life ether, Chemical ether, Light ether and Warmth ether; these closely relate to the four elements Earth, Water, Air and Fire.'*

His paper is readily available on the internet, so I will leave the details for you to observe. It is my observation however that he makes one huge mistake. He appears to have confused the Life Ether and the Chemical Ether. Due to associating the Life Ether processes, as being the same as the Life Sap processes, from the lecture given a week earlier. Based upon this he makes many comments and a few drawings, I do not agree with, especially the drawings on page 10 and 21. I have presented alternatives to these on my website, with my version of his page 21, above.



## **Richard Thornton Smith — Cosmos , Earth and Nutrition**

This book was published in 2009, and it represents the BD world view I found in most parts of Europe I have visited. It offers a valiant attempt to synthesis the large Biodynamic world view, into as modern and scientifically relevant language, as might seem possible. However when it comes to the energetic picture of the Cosmos, side of this title, it leaves the reader in the 'hodge podge soup', that is characteristic of the Wachsmuth inheritance. Most of the bits of the BD story are represented, but in no definable order or sequence, as the author falls into the trap of struggling to tell the four fold story, as a two fold one. His is the tale of Cosmic / Ethers and Earthly / Substances. The clarity of definition bought by Lievegoed, Peliken, Konig and Poppelbaum is completely lacking. Thus he is unable to define the difference between the cosmic ether and the atmospheric ethers, while making no definable differentiation between star and planetary activities, and how they relate to the ethers. This book thus becomes the latest example of 'modern Biodynamics' where everything is jumbled together, with the gaps glossed over by the wonderful activities of spiritual beings, and lashings of faith.

## **Peter Proctor**

Proctor — the self proclaimed father of modern BD in the southern hemisphere — has long been a Wachsmuth enthusiast. He talked enthusiastically of it in the my early BD education, in the late 1970s. His 1997 publication 'Grasp the Nettle' - republished in 2004— references Wachsmuth in chapter 2 pg 19. He says " To the cosmic energy force that supports life, Steiner gave the name 'etheric'; the force that holds and gives shape to plants he called the 'etheric formative force' ". There is no further clarification of how these activities fit into the broader biodynamic cosmic picture. However the Wachsmuth heritage is dragged from the dustbin, given credibility, and back into the 'modern BD' story, in spite of the best efforts of 50 years of better educated BD leaders. Proctor, was a Platonist, and was not known for his depth of approach.

The two fold view of BD, that arises from Wachsmuth, follows in Proctor's tracks and is widespread in New Zealand and Australia, and I suspect also India. There is a variation on the Etheric / Cosmic and Physical / Earthly story, found here though.

Within the Agriculture course it is very obvious that the Astrality has a role to play, as a contracting force coming from above. People quickly note from their experience of Cow manure prep (500), the internal Etheric is the expansive force from below. The contracting nature of the Astrality is seen in 501. So the two fold story has morphed, into the Astrality being the cosmic pole, and the Etheric with the physical, being the Earthly pole, as shown in my earlier experiment. There is not any inclusion of the Spirit in this story though, as the formative dominance of the etheric is maintained, and there is no ability to understand the highly polarised Physical Formative Forces. The undefined Etheric still comes from the periphery, but is reflected back from the Earth, as the internal Etheric moving outwards.

The 'Modern BD' stories differ significantly from 'traditional' Biodynamics, and the aberrations mentioned here, suggests it needs to be viewed with some suspicion. One trend that is evident in these 'Proctor' areas, is that the next generation, are dropping any reference to the 'esoteric' aspects of BD, with the promotion of an 'organics plus the preps' variation taking its place. Planting by the Moon is promoted as working with the cosmic influences. In short there is a materialisation of Biodynamics occurring, due to the esoteric elements of Biodynamics being presented to them, as a hodge podge quasi religious belief, which they know is not appropriate for general consumption. To add some differentiation from the organic movement the general BD movement is now focusing on BD as a social movement. This mirrors the socialist roots of the Anthroposophical Curative homes within which BD has been nurtured since 1924; and their inability to practically grasp RS 'esoteric' indications.

## **Enzo Nastati**

Enzo's world view is based upon the 4 Astronomical spheres, and is a huge story. However in his 'The Regeneration of Seeds and New Plants' on page 52, he puts forward a diagram very similar to GW Schmidht's, with the confused Chemical and Life Ethers.

Dare I say, one enters the 'realm of Enzo' at ones own risk. I have written a critique of his 'Basic

Biodynamic Agriculture in 9 lectures' - <http://garudabd.org/wp-content/uploads/In-response-to-Enzo.pdf> , where I point out many 'problems', most notably his insistence on the 'seed chaos' event being at germination. ( see: <http://garudabd.org/2020/05/07/when-is-seed-chaos/> )

### Other Consequences

What arises from this journey, is that amazingly GW's view or versions of it, has survived into the present, even though it has been clearly bought into doubt by subsequent generations, and especially by those at the 'centre', during the 70s and 80s. This should have been enough for it to not be accepted, by anyone. It should be clear that GW needs to be seen within a greater context, and be redefined by this greater context. Thus his book needs to be rewritten before it can be taken seriously within Biodynamics. There are many things within it that have real value. It has been out of print for some time, however it is now freely available on the internet, and often cited as a reference of import, for the 'implosion community', who have no knowledge of its fundamental errors, or subsequent critiques. Given the Anthroposophical ethic, to 'leave people free', there is no decree issued 'from above', and it is very rare for Apops to directly confront each other. In this case there are several direct statements GW had it wrong. Yet it seems we all still have to stumble into this gapping hole and find our own way out.

Apart from the examples cited, many subsequent writers have not openly addressed this issue, even though the 4 ethers are regularly presented as a primary BD topic. It is the 'elephant in the room'.

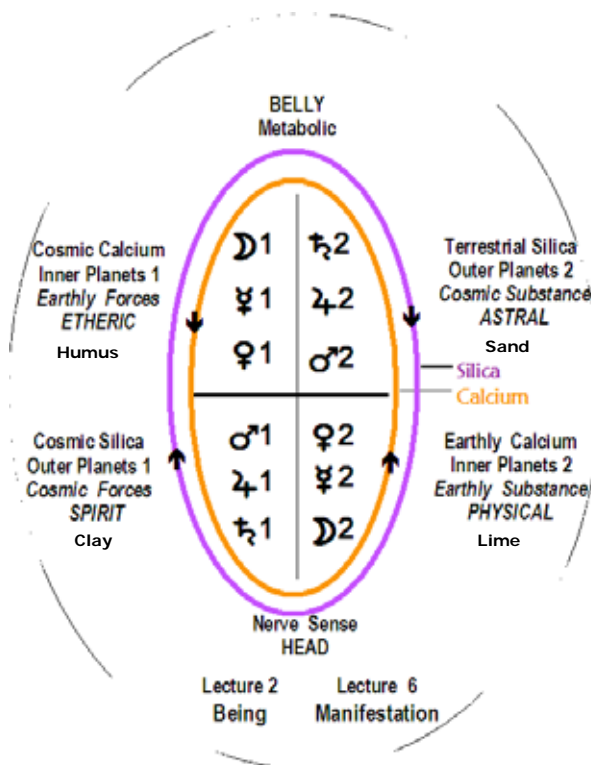
In questioning GW, and reasserting the 'dominance' of the four primary activities, and their subsequent interrelationships, I am also LOUDLY bringing into question the dominance of the threefold 'religious' story, that exists strongly within some sections of modern BD. Biodynamics can be understood as a logical outcome of astronomy and astrology, as shown by RS in the Agriculture and Medical lectures, where no religious references were used. Innovation and furthering of BD practises naturally follow, as opposed to the GW path where very little development has occurred in the last 90 years. Indeed it is the opposite case, people are driven away by its irrationality.

### Physical Formative Forces

One real 'victim' arising from the two fold trap, is the topic of clay and its role as one of the levers of the PFF. In lecture two RS outlines how the four astronomical activities are mediated within the physical processes via the four substance of, Clay, Lime/Cations, Sand and Humus. In the following lecture he does the same by outlining their manifestation within the Mineral FF via Hydrogen, Oxygen, Nitrogen and Carbon. In lecture two he presents the picture firstly, of the 3 fold Ag. Individuality, (3 pages) and then

goes on to talk for the next 13 pages of the four activities working via the Cosmic Forces, Cosmic Substance, Earthly Substance and Earthly Forces. During this lecture, on three separate occasions, RS says that clay helps the upward movement of the Cosmic Force / Silica process from the Earth, up to the seed. However at the very end of the third lecture, after he has talked of how the four elements of protein work with Calcium and Silica, he makes a passing comment that *clay acts as a mediator of the Calcium and Silica processes*, but immediately checks himself by saying , *but it is more related to Silica*. He follows this a few lines later with, *But since a certain period, lime has been formed underneath and lime disturbs the work, and because the opposition of the limestone had to be overcome, carbon allies itself to silicon and both together, in combination with clay, they once again start on their formative work*. Here again, he affirms the relationship of clay to Silica and Carbon's vertical axis.

But for the 3 fold BDers, they have taken this one passing 'middle' comment as gospel, and conclude that clay is the mediating preparation between Horn Silica and Horn Manure,



in complete disregard of the 3 other very clear statements in lecture 2. No amount of reason has had the slightest influence upon their belief, because this fits their 3 fold dogma, and they can just 'set aside' the other three very clear statements. In some cases, they quote them in support of their middle view, without any explanation.

In doing this they obliterate the existence of the 4 'Physical Formative Forces' and the very practical solutions these provide for agriculture. These activities become beyond their comprehension and are again 'set aside', even though there is a very clear picture given of their use in lecture 8. They justify this 'problem' by suggesting lecture 8 only relates to animals, with some folks suggesting it should be removed from the course as irrelevant.

I suggest to these folks, that all the four elements outlined in lecture two are 'middle' elements, in the lecture 3 context. Clay, 'lime'/ Cations, Sand and Humus, are all needed for Horn Silica and Horn Manure to work together properly. Take any one of these away and these two preparations will have difficulty working properly. As a result of this lacking, no real science of the Cosmic and Earthly, Forces and Substances has been pursued, over the last 90 years. My own effort have shown this avenue to be of great fundamental value to Biodynamic practice. (10)

### **The Path to Materialism**

The most dramatic consequence of the 'official' setting aside of large sections of the Agriculture course is, that these sections outline a world view very similar to that presented by RS in his medical lectures, given during this same period. So similar is the Agriculture course to the medical work, that RS wanted them to be under the 'control' of the medical section at the Goetheaneum. Dr Wegmen refused due to her already large responsibilities. Instead they were placed under GW's 'control' in the Natural Science Section. An 'Agriculture Section' has since been established.

So, as well as being unable to fully comprehend the significance of the PFF, a practical approach to working directly with the 4 primary astronomical activities, as suggested in RS's indications of their relationship to the compost preparations, is unavailable. With the Etheric being formatively dominant, the roles of the Astrality and Spirit are negated, and RS's accepted worldview is unattainable.

Rather than question this 'non understanding', or extend their reading to the medical literature, as RS requested, these sections of the Biodynamic community have developed a world view completely out of sync with the rest of the Anthroposophical medical community. They go on and offer an interpretation that conforms more to religious beliefs, than to the actual lectures. This is naturally leading to the lectures being abandoned - as we see in the NZ Taruna BD course - and as the story becomes less realistic, BD is reduced to its bare minimum, and biological materialistic BD marches forth, dressing itself up with a social purpose.

**The Agriculture Course is not the story of the Ethers,  
and can not be understood within their context.**

### **Epilogue**

To sum up, our dilemma is the urgent need to address two divergent world views. One that is supported by the worldwide Apop medical community, that leads to a comprehensive understanding of the Agriculture course and an open horizon of developments (14), and another which stops at stage 1 of the BD journey and provides a simplified twofold view of creation, that can not be used to understand the whole Agriculture Course, and ultimately leads to a simplified materialistic view of creation with very little opportunity for real innovation. While these two different paths exist, unconsciously within Biodynamics, it deserves all the scorn and irrelevance, it receives. Islam is fighting over one teacher or the other, yet we have a division between hugely different whole world views. This can only lead to a huge parting of the ways, or RS's efforts being drowned in confusion, if this is left unresolved. Especially, now 'the problem' has been seen, called and named 'Medical BD' and 'Modern BD'.

This essay can be little more than another stake in the sand, of these well worn 'wrong way' pleas, made by my very respected predecessors, and I can but hope it will have more influence than their efforts, which are obviously not enough. I appreciate I am possibly the only person of my generation

who has seen this matter so starkly, and luckily I have long ago learnt the chant, 'being unique only means you are the first'. But in this case I am not, previous generations have already tried.

Please pass this essay around and please correspond with me about its contents at [garuda@xtra.co.nz](mailto:garuda@xtra.co.nz)

## Appendix 1

### Etheric Counterspace

The subject of the Etheric in all its manifestations, being viewed by Anthroposophy as a 'counterspace' to our normal EM space, needs addressing. I did not want this aspect of this topic to detract from the primary question, and so I add it here as a appendix. While this topic is closely linked to the primary one, it can be separated as both streams of the first discussion, can and do support the idea of the Etheric as a counterspace. Whether it is or not is therefore a different discussion again. But like the primary discussion this also leads in two directions, with one more acceptable to the modern scientific mind than the other.

\* \* \*

Once the polarity of Etheric and Physical was established, a further step was taken to consider the Etheric something other than the predominant electro magnetic reality everything else runs upon.

Poppelbaum (1) offers a quote of RS, *"From all sides these etheric forces stream, as if striving towards the center of the Earth. They would be compelled to tear the earthly matter to pieces, to dissolve it into formlessness, did there not enter into this 'space of forces' the modifying influence of the extra terrestrial heavenly bodies (1)"*, and then goes on to talk of the etheric as a 'counterspace'.

There are two ways of viewing this statement. 1) From the time of GW, the concept arose that the Cosmic Etheric, and therefore all things etheric, was of a different dimensional nature to EM. This made some sense given the dual quality of the cosmic and earthly activities, that develop from his worldview. This 'counterspace' is synonymous to the modern idea of dark matter and light matter, as two completely opposite parts of one whole. This 'idea' has become a hopeful poster child of some alternative scientists, as a 'other' dimension from which free energy can be drawn.

A lot of work went into theoretical proof of this 'idea'. Mathematical 'proofs' by Adams and Locher are offered as the justifications of this, while EM realities were attempted to be co-opted in its proof. Conclusions of this counterspace being non EM, are drawn from using EM chemical elements (chromatography and crystallisation) as an expression of EM plants responses to the EM planetary movements (4). The assumption these EM based methodologies prove the existence of this counterspace, is still blindly accepted today, by many. What this work does prove is the formative power of EM, and in RS's championing of this work, as an expression of the etheric, we see him acknowledging its EM nature.

So in 1951, when later generations begin making a call for differentiation of the Cosmic Ether into the original Spirit, Astral and Etheric parts, the idea that the Etheric still comes from the universal periphery, rather than the Earths Ionosphere, and is not EM in nature, holds on. Poppelbaum promotes this idea in 1977, as does Thornton Smith in 2009.

We need to note this concept of 'the ethers' was first bought into the western philosophic tradition by RS, yet 'counterspace' has long been a religious standard, given the creator God must be not bound by anything as mechanical as EM. These two 'ideas' fuse in Anthroposophy, and are very much alive, even if both are still unproven. These beliefs allow a raft of religious beliefs occurring in this non EM realm.

In this context, this quote is seen to mean by Poppelbaum, that the etheric 'other' forces coming from above, would shatter the matter into formlessness, if it was not for the outside EM forces of the planets and Stars, bringing contracting influences to the etheric to bring life into form. The EM extra terrestrial heavenly bodies are seen to be of a fundamentally different quality to the Etheric, however these two opposites interact. Indeed we can conclude the EM portion controls the non EM portion. Some commentators believe that the EM Planets and Stars have a counterspace component, wherein resides the spiritual beings, and RS is actually referring to this, whenever he directly talks of the planets or

constellations by name.

2) An alternative interpretation is that RS is still talking of the Cosmic Ether here, which includes the stars and planets, coming from the periphery, so when it hits the Earth, it is the Etheric activities within the Cosmic Ether complex, that contain the shattering influences of their physical companion, as the etheric just wants to make a huge blob of dividing cells. The Star and Planetary companions both internally and externally work to contain, form and make use of all this Etheric growth activity.

Hence all of these forces are of the same nature. RS is not meaning something from outside of a EM nature working upon something of a counterspace nature. This view does not require the Etheric to exist as a non EM counterspace to our EM normal space, and thus is comprehensible to the modern mind.

Even if the Etheric is considered separate to EM, this quote says that in life, this 'other' non EM dimension is controlled by the EM stars and planets.

The Apop story has EM 'falling out of' the ethers, (ie below), however the ethers can not act independently of EM. Every action we take within Biodynamics directly manipulates some part of the EM spectrum. Requests for a demonstration of something we do that does not firstly manipulate EM have gone unanswered. A similar quid pro quo arises when discussing the effects of the spiritual beings. RS made a clear statement, repeated by Dr Vreede in her 'Astronomical Letters', that due to Humans needing 'spiritual freedom' the spiritual beings have withdrawn to their planets, and can now only act when the planetary positions and interactions allow them to. Hence we have these 'other' forces being bound to EM, yet there is a fervent denial of the central role EM plays. In some Apop quarters, a Christian concept of evil is placed upon the 'fallen' EM, and then used as an excuse to not look at methodologies such as radionics, magnetics or electric frequencies, as influences upon life, even though RS has encouraged investigation of the latter two in the medical lectures.

All of these unprovable 'big beliefs' are quite unnecessary when we accept that RS is always talking of EM astronomical realities, when he talks of Stars and Planets, and Atmospheric influences, and physics does the rest. Astrology (astronomy applied to life on Earth, as above - so below) is indeed a fact of physics.

Even if one wishes to bring the spiritual beings into your theology, one has to accept they are beings of the planetary spheres and secondary manifestations of the EM galaxy. Energy first, Order second, Beings third. Look at our own manifestation. Did humans manifest first or last? I suggest manifestation is a process of continual increasing complexity from small beginnings. Beings, at any stage of creation, are a manifestation of a pre existing EM order. I appreciate these conclusions are challenging to Anthroposophists. But let us observe, most of the theological 'problems' of Biodynamics are seated within Anthroposophical beliefs. Something has to move, somewhere.

The paths of these two stories lead in two different directions. A) Cosmic Ether > Counterspace > Religious belief > Rejection by the modern mind. B) Cosmic Ether > EM realities > Rationale based on astronomical reality > Acceptance by the modern mind. This is the stark reality facing Biodynamics.

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