

BIODYNAMIC CANNABIS

Moving Beyond the Yea or Nay

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DEAR MEMBERS AND COLLEAGUES,

As you well know, one role of the Biodynamic Association is to create a forum where diverse perspectives can be shared on new developments in the biodynamic movement. Our job is not to dispense dogmas, but to inspire new impulses, stimulate independent thinking, and help make our community visible to itself.

It would thus be completely out of tune with our mission to shy away from controversial developments within the biodynamic movement. For this reason, with this issue of *Biodynamics*, we have chosen to jump in with both feet to the complex theme of biodynamic Cannabis.

As readers will soon discover, the complexity and controversy are the result of two realities, both of which appear to be true, but which are not easily brought into harmony. The first reality is that, from a movement-building perspective, the growing Cannabis industry appears to present a significant opportunity to bring more people and acres in touch with the healing influence of biodynamics. Colum Riley gives an excellent overview of this perspective in this issue, and it's hard to argue with his logic.

The second reality is that, from a deeper, social-spiritual perspective, the growth in recreational Cannabis use is clearly not conducive to the long-term health of human beings or society. Lisa Romero articulates the reasons for this with great clarity, also in this issue. Put simply, the relief offered by Cannabis to those suffering the weight of our materialistic culture is gained in a largely passive way—that is, by imbibing a consciousness-altering substance from outside ourselves—rather than through an inwardly active, conscious, spiritual, or artistic practice. I find this logic also compelling.

Does this mean, however, that Cannabis use is always unhealthy, even for medicinal purposes? Does it mean we should judge the millions of Cannabis users as working against the evolution of humanity and seek to prevent the legalization of Cannabis? I think not. Coming to terms with consciousness-altering substances is an important part of human evolution and destiny in our time, and giving adult human beings the right to find their individual relationship to Cannabis seems fully justified. Furthermore, while Cannabis use has many negative

impacts, it may in fact be appropriate and healing in the unique context of a particular individual's biography. Some have even argued that the "guiding spirit" of Cannabis has a healing mission in society at this time, a mission we have yet to fully understand. These possibilities and perspectives must also be taken into account.

Just as some farms, even biodynamic farms, cannot meet all their fertility needs from within the farm itself without the use of inputs from outside the farm—even though this is the ideal—so human beings cannot always manage their life challenges purely through conscious self-development and the support of friends, family, and community. What is needed in society at large, therefore, is a highly nuanced, broad-minded, and threefold approach that draws on the rightful roles of the spiritual-cultural, political, and economic sectors of society.¹

For example, for the reason stated above, I believe the political state should recognize and uphold the rights of adults to produce, distribute, and consume Cannabis. I also believe, however, that this process needs to be *highly* regulated, ideally by representatives of the economic life itself, including associations of consumers, rather than by the state apparatus. This regulation would have to insure:

- The purity of the substances;
- That they are produced in a way that protects and enhances the health of the earth;
- That they are distributed in a way that is economically fair to all the players in the supply chain; and
- That they are not available to minors or others who are at the greatest risk of harm.

The right to produce, distribute, and consume should therefore be conditional on the ability of this economic community to self-regulate to the highest standards.

I also think it is essential that a significant portion of sales of Cannabis go to robust research, education, and public health efforts, ideally carried out by independent representatives of the spiritual and cultural life, rather than by the state, with the ultimate goal of enhancing genuine medicinal use and quality, reducing recreational consumption, and healing the effects of addiction and abuse.

Such a nuanced, three-fold approach, if truly implemented, would be able to both protect human rights *and* nurture human health. I believe Rudolf Steiner was taking a similar stance when he expressed openness to the adoption of biodynamic practices by vineyards, even though he pointed out on several occasions that alcohol consumption was harmful to human beings in our time, even in small amounts. We simply must learn to think holistically about these matters, if we are going to overcome the politicized polarizations of our time.

In the microcosm of the biodynamic movement, therefore, I would suggest that we need a multi-pronged approach to the Cannabis issue along the following lines:

1. First of all, we need open-minded engagement with the community of Cannabis producers, distributors, and users, in order to 1) meet the growing interest in biodynamics coming from this community and 2) foster associative economic relationships among these individuals and companies. *Ideally, this engagement would be primarily focused on the medicinal Cannabis industry.*
2. Secondly, we need a robust research effort, ideally supported by the Biodynamic® Cannabis industry itself, using both natural and spiritual-scientific methods, to better understand Cannabis from a holistic perspective. What exactly is the destiny of this plant in our time, and what are its most appropriate uses?
3. I can also imagine an innovative educational and social-therapeutic effort, also supported by the Biodynamic Cannabis industry, focused on the use of disciplined spiritual and artistic practices as alternatives to recreational Cannabis use and as a preventative against drug abuse and addictions of all kinds.
4. For the success of all of the above, we need to support our friends at Demeter USA in continuing to uphold a medicinal Cannabis standard and certification system that ensures that all breeding, production, and processing of Biodynamic Cannabis are aligned with the highest biodynamic principles.

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In closing, I think we need to recognize that—just as the apparent truth that Cannabis use is unhealthy is not necessarily true in all individual cases—the apparent truth that the growing Cannabis industry is a huge boon for the biodynamic movement may not prove to be completely true. The Biodynamic “brand,” for example, could get overly colored by its high visibility in the wine and Cannabis marketplace, and this could begin to limit its appeal among food producers, retailers, and consumers.

I therefore believe strongly that our response to the growing use of Cannabis should include ***a major commitment by the biodynamic movement to spreading Biodynamic production and certification among food producers.*** After all, isn’t this the core mission of our movement and aren’t so many of society’s problems, including those that lead to the need or desire for Cannabis, the result of our devitalized food and soil?

With these thoughts, I leave you, dear reader, to navigate your own way through these subtle and important questions of our time.

Note

¹ For more background on social threefolding, see Rudolf Steiner, *Toward Social Renewal* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999).

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