

March/April 2021

# CAMP HILL CORRESPONDENCE



Painting by Era Montecillo

*"I was astonished by the vast size of Acadia National Park and while walking I had this realization of being a small part of the vast universe and it is the same feeling that I get when I look at the night sky here in Ghent. Two places in one picture."*

# Reflecting on a very '2020' Camphill Research Symposium

By Elizabeth Sanders

If we were together in person, offered Daniel McKanan in the closing moments of the 2020 Camphill Research Symposium, this is the time when we would sit down and start to digest the things we had heard and experienced together. This is the time when the questions, the insights, the heated debates and enthusiastic future visioning would start to form. But here, in this virtual space, we hadn't yet come to terms with how to support that emergence without the architecture and choreography of embodied encounter. There is a certain intimacy and vulnerability in a room as it gradually empties, and a breathing-out that happens when linear rows of chairs shuffle into scatter plots across the floor, littered still with notepads and emptied coffee cups. The event is over; we begin packing up our baggage. The event is not-yet-over; we begin unpacking the baggage we brought with us.

This was the third Camphill Research Symposium I had been involved in curating, having participated in the annual event every year since its inception in 2015. This was by far the most dramatic departure from its prior iterations. Even the 2019 Symposium, held jointly with the triennial conference of the International Communal Studies Association, was more familiar despite the relative scale and complexity of the event itself. The 2020 Symposium, like all things 2020, was an experiment in what it means to maintain traditions in radically new circumstances. The content of the event focused on Daniel McKanan's new book Camphill and the Future: Spirituality and Disability in an Evolving Communal Movement. Held over three weeks in November, each session brought together international panels of community members to reflect on the three main sections of McKanan's text—generational transitions in Camphill, the various

constituencies that comprise the movement, and the contemporary contexts which Camphill lives within today.

Each of the three sessions is available for viewing online thanks to the support of the Camphill Foundation, and I encourage you to go and view them for a sense not only of the breadth of McKanan's research, but also the stunning diversity of the movement itself. What our virtual event lacked in intimacy it made up for in reach and representation, the first truly international Camphill Research Symposium. Moreover, because the event had a single orienting theme there was a cohesion and clarity that helped to ground the diversity on display. The event was also notable in that, unlike previous symposia, it largely featured "Camphillers" rather than academics. While a number of the panelists are researchers in their own right, their primary vantage point was as "insiders" responding to an "outsider's" research and distillation of the history and potential futures of their movement. It therefore had the feeling of being, somewhat paradoxically, more "internal" and more "expansive" than any symposium before it.

There was also a notable absence. As plagues many academic events (and our previous Symposia) we failed to adequately address barriers to inclusion for many community members: the event was heavy with academic language, only minor visual accompaniment (other than the speakers' faces), and the absence of built-in accessibility features (closed captioning, translation, clear outlines or even plain language accompaniment). That is not to say that the event was entirely exclusive: the second panel in particular featured a number of disabled community members sharing their experiences, and panelists took the initiative to accompany their own presentations with imagery. Reflecting on the event I

personally have learned so much about accessibility and what needs to be in place for such a virtual event (or any event!) to be truly welcoming and inclusive, but I regret that I had not learned these lessons earlier.

The biggest barrier, however, and one which needs a more substantive, perhaps non-technological remedy, is time. For community members with or without disabilities, the segmenting and shrinking of time that occurs in virtual space makes it nearly impossible to wander, to meander through dialogue. In community events we do this quite literally—we wander in and out of the room, catching snippets of conversations, moving in and out of scheduled discourse. We wander together, observing, noting, reflecting, laughing, and dreaming in a way that the rigidity of virtual communication does not—in my experience—easily support. The after-event that Dan invoked—the conversations that bubble up after the schedule has emptied—allows responses, questions, and imaginations to arise without the clock pressure of the “question and answer” segment. Many of us struggle to verbalize quick, succinct, spontaneous responses, especially when the questions touch on things as deep as inclusion, community, belonging, and what the future might hold. One of the most significant questions I have held with me since the Symposium is precisely this: what can we put in place—virtually, in person, surrounding and within an event, that enables all community members to be co-creators? This raises an even more fundamental question—what is the intention, the purpose, behind such an event for us as community builders?

The Camphill Research Symposium began in 2015 as an initiative of the Camphill Foundation in North America. The Symposium has since been an opportunity for academics and the Camphill movement in North America to meet and learn alongside one another, as well as provide a forum for new and emerging research about the Camphill movement to be received by an informed audience.

From my vantage point as a participant, presenter, and organizer, it has been a tremendous privilege to learn from colleagues in and around Camphill. Likewise, the opportunity to hear from external researchers, those not connected to Camphill, invites us to examine our assumptions and practices from an outsider’s perspective, one which doesn’t take our inherited narratives for granted. I have been enthusiastic to hear from these researchers over the years precisely because they challenge, confuse, and even confront my own beliefs. My perspectives on their work have evolved—I have variously gained a deeper appreciation, overcome initial negative reactions to develop a more open and nuanced take, become critical after initial enthusiasm, and in some cases not fully grappled with the resonance of their work until much later. Thanks to the space created by the Foundation for the annual Symposium, we have been given the great privilege to bring these ideas into dialogue with our own, as an opportunity for learning, communication, and transformation. To these ends, we left the Symposium asking how we can keep these conversations going. What forums do we have already available, and what processes might need to be newly created? I hope that the Correspondence can serve as one of those outlets into the future.

The three sessions of this year’s Camphill Research Symposium, featuring Camphill communities in the UK, Botswana, the US, Argentina, and beyond are available online via the Camphill Foundation <https://camphillfoundation.org/research/> and the Camphill Research Network <https://research.camphill.edu/>. For more information and open access to Dan McKanan’s book, see <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520344082/camphill-and-the-future>. If you wish to purchase a physical copy, please do so directly with [University of California Press](https://www.ucpress.edu/). If you represent a bookstore or wish to make a bulk order, please contact Dan McKanan at [dmckanan@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:dmckanan@hds.harvard.edu), as discounts may be available.

# Camphill and the Future: Spirituality and Disability in an Evolving Communal Movement, Dan McKanan, University of California Press, 2020

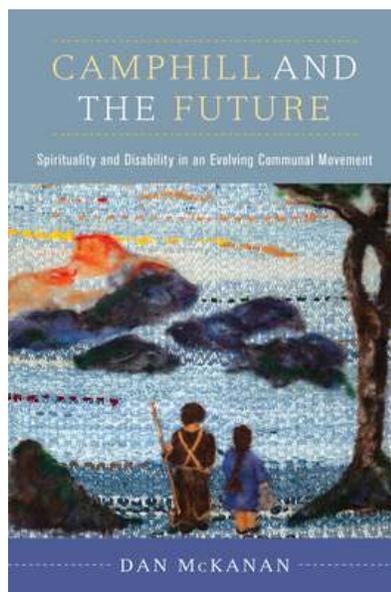
Review by David Andrew Schwartz

Dan McKanan has been connected with Camphill since the summer of 1999, when he was welcomed into the life of Camphill Minnesota. For the last twenty years he has cultivated his connection with Camphill by visiting Camphill communities all over North America and Europe. The book reflects his years of devoted research on Camphill. For all his work researching and supporting Camphill's communal effort, he received the Camphill Foundation's Elizabeth Boggs Leadership Award in 2020, the 80th anniversary year of the founding of Camphill. Dan McKanan is a concerned and genuine friend of Camphill.

Currently, the author serves as the Ralph Waldo Emerson Unitarian Universalist Senior Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School, where he has taught since 2008. He has a PhD from the university of Chicago. He studies religious and spiritual movements for social transformation, with particular emphasis on intentional communities and environmental activism. Much of his research focuses on the anthroposophical movement. He is also the author of *Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism* (University of California Press 2018). This book excellently presents the basic ideas of biodynamic agriculture and the history of biodynamic practices around the world. This book stands in stark contrast to the academic critics of anthroposophy and biodynamics who have emerged in the last twenty years.

McKanan is connected with the International

Communal Studies Association (ICSA) and has served as chair of the ICSA. In 2019 he organized an international meeting of the ICSA that was hosted by the four Camphill communities in Columbia County, Northern New York (Camphill Village Copake, Triform, Camphill Hudson and Camphill Ghent). It was an inclusive event and a festival for Camphill's "coming out" in the international communal studies scene.



Using his knowledge of the history of intentional communities, McKanan attempts in the two hundred pages of his book to place Camphill (1) as part of the international movement of intentional communities and (2) in its current developmental situation. He is aware that Camphill is celebrating its eightieth anniversary of its

founding and knows that not many intentional communities manage to exist that long, much less expect to continue on to their one hundredth anniversary. The book addresses the specifics of the developmental situation that Camphill is in as an intentional community, describing why it has succeeded to develop for eighty years (three generations) and what would be necessary for it to continue to develop into the future. He identifies various important issues facing the community and analyzes these issues historically. Out of this process

of analysis he outlines alternatives for Camphill communities to take to be able to move forward into the future. He recognizes that Camphill is facing various challenges to its future. He does not gloss over these challenges (i.e. government regulation, funding, coworker recruitment, fading interest in its spiritual ideals, mission drift, etc.). In creating a developmental picture for Camphill, the book is by necessity provocative. The book's analytical and historical approach is made clear by the three chapters of the book. The book is based on numerous interviews with members of the community over a twenty-year period. Passages from these interviews are cited in the book when a point is being made.

The first chapter is devoted to the subject of "Camphill Generations." He identifies five distinct generations that have appeared in Camphill's development: the founders; those who came along with the founders; those from the Baby Boomer generation; what he calls "a missing generation"; and the fourth generation pointing to the future. Each of these generations is described and their interrelations are presented. The whole drama of founders and those that follow is addressed.

The second chapter refers to "Camphill Constituencies." In this chapter the various groups of people who are typically part of a Camphill community are identified and described. Six groups are identified: Students and Villagers (the members of the community with intellectual and developmental disabilities); Lifesharing Coworkers (long term coworkers living in the community); Young Coworkers (short term coworkers living in the community); Employees; Parents (family members of the Students and Villagers); and Board Members (supporters responsible for the operation of the legal organization under which the

community operates). The dynamic of the control of the community by the Lifesharing Coworkers, the breakdown of that control and the inadequate inclusion of the other constituencies is described.

The third chapter is called "Camphill Contexts." Six such contexts are set forth. A context in the sense of this chapter describes a larger picture that a Camphill community is part of and that affects the life of the community significantly. The contexts that are described are: The Anthroposophical Movement; Other Communal Movements; Environmentalism; Social Care in an Age of Austerity; Disability Rights; and Camphill Crisis and Renewal. Each of these contexts needs to be understood and taken into consideration when attempting to understand the way forward for any particular Camphill community. Matters such as increasing governmental regulation and oversight, mission drift at the board level, and the aging-out of long term, life-sharing co-workers are addressed. Also, the person with intellectual and developmental disabilities needing to self-advocate for inclusion, independence, housing, work and recreation is recognized.

In the concluding words of the book the author sums up his thoughts about Camphill's future on a hopeful note:

*... the key to a hopeful future may be the movement's [Camphill] willingness to expand its decision-making structures to include all the people who have contributed to the growth of the movement thus far: students, villagers, coworkers, young coworkers, employees, board members, and many more. ... Camphill's challenge is to make that mutual participation fully conscious. ... Camphill's openness to ongoing transformation is the most important fruit of its rootedness in anthroposophy. ... the true spirit of anthroposophy is not conservative but evolutionary. ...*

*Camphill ... is rather, a messy mix, planted deep in its many contexts, always growing – and in its continued growth, still inspiring and transforming those of us whose lives have been touched by it.*

The author has already participated in online meetings of the Camphill Research Symposium sponsored by the Camphill Foundation and of the Camphill Association of North America (the organization of the Camphill communities in North America) using the approaches taken in his book to guide discussions about Camphill's future. In these meetings the content of the book demonstrated its

usefulness in supporting conversations about Camphill's future and the challenges facing communities as they attempt to chart a way into the future.

This book is intended to be not only an academic resource for communal studies, but also a practical, social guide for the Camphill Movement and other intentional communities.

The book is currently available online along with other books that the author has written.

## **A Letter from Camphill India**

By Francis Aradhya

Dear friends,

Please receive this letter with several impulses, experiences and stories from Friends of Camphill India, also in the light of the worldwide changes...

Friends of Camphill India is a small life sharing community whose journey goes back to 1999. We began with a group of three young adults with special needs, a newly constructed house in the middle of nowhere and a large wild garden. With no running water, numerous days without electricity and the occasional herd of wild elephants visiting our garden, it was definitely a humble and adventurous beginning!

Today, 22 years on, we are a community of around 40 people, 24 of whom have special needs. Together

with our friends, as we call our residents, we have transformed our land surrounding the 2 houses into a beautiful terraced garden filled with native tree species, fruit trees, vegetable patches and rain water harvesting structures. This small but richly diverse ecosystem has been shaped by a lot of impulses including biodynamics, permaculture and ancient Indian agricultural practices. Hundreds of hands have touched our soil, planted trees and made biodynamic compost which has enriched the deeply degraded soil we started out with.



As our garden continues to grow and flourish, the surrounding area is being transformed at an unbelievable speed. Fertile farmland, grazing spaces, ancient trees and lakes are making way for new houses, factories and real estate developments. We are located right on the edge of two extreme contrasts. To the North we have to contend with the ever-expanding mega city Bangalore, while to the south lies the 260 square kilometre Bannerghatta national park which is now one of the last safe spaces for the local wildlife in this area. We do miss the peace and quiet from the early days, as well as the cleaner air and clearer skies that once were.

We have since the last few years come to feel that we need more space to expand, to farm and work on the land. Being witness to the degradation of the natural world in our surroundings, we decided to buy land further out in the countryside. Our dream is to expand into a second community with a renewed focus on agriculture and sustainable living. Located around 25 kilometers away from the nearest city Mysore, our new piece of land is now ready for a small group of pioneers to move in. Over the last year and a half, we have constructed a small farm house and all the basic infrastructure is ready to support this step, including a solar energy system which was recently donated by a very generous friend and supporter of our community. We are looking for people who want to join us on this journey of exploring how to live in a way that meets the various needs of not only the people who will live there but also those of the land, the needs of our planet and our humanity in these unprecedented times. Discovering what community living can offer in today's world of hyper individualism, climate

emergency and ever-changing society. And finding out how social therapy can be rooted in the soil beneath our feet.



Last March we prepared a three day Festival to celebrate our 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday. The rich programme which included music, talks, dance, drama pieces and of course a delicious menu, was hoping to draw about two hundred participants to our campus. It was going to be a genuine Camphill event with our twenty-four special friends at the core of it all. The events of the festival would have been a reflection of twenty-one truly valuable years of being a Camphill Community unique to itself in the south of India.

All these years a brave team of permanent Indian coworkers "held the ship" so to speak while hundreds of young volunteers from all over the world came and went, staying usually for a year, and helped us flourish. As the years passed, we saw our trees grow, ourselves develop, and our ethereal substance get enriched. We have been free, unseen and unknown by the wider society or the government. We had only our own conscience to support us in our endeavour to practice social therapy in the widest sense. The Festival, which wanted to celebrate all this, never took place because suddenly the changes in the world became

applicable to us as well. The history of the first 21 years remained though. Let me describe a few aspects.



Since we are Camphill pioneers in South India we had the necessity to enrich ourselves by conducting training programmes. During the last fifteen years we had about sixty people from all over India attending a three year part time course on Social Therapy hosted by our community. (Foundation Courses in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy). The course was fortunate to receive, as teachers, Camphillers and Waldorf teachers from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, India and the USA. Simple accommodation, great vegetarian organic food and a creative blending with the day to day life of our residents was offered to the participants besides the subject matter. We are really satisfied and happy with this achievement in our biography. The last batch of relatively young students completed the third (of seven) session of their course last February and then all got hampered due to the changes in the world...

Another outreach activity we nourished and cherished

was the following: Since 2013 we, as a community, have been attending annual Festivals of Anthroposophy in India travelling hundreds of kilometers to attend these inspiring weekends. Every year, we present a play at these festivals. At the last Festival in 2019 we presented “Maha Yuddham,” a play written and performed by our community. “Maha Yuddham” means “Big War.” The play spoke about the eco crisis and how man must and can take up responsibility for all the suffering he has caused to the living world. It displayed how mankind has lost much awareness in all three dimensions of space, allowing forces to work against the development of the spiritual dimension of man. Like Tagore said after he became totally disillusioned about the global contributions from the West: “Western man, you have gained the whole world but you have lost your soul.” Maha Yuddham displayed that eventually the most difficult part in redeeming our guilt is the awakening that the dragon to be fought is not external to us anymore. There has to be great inner movement and inner battles to begin to pay back all the wrong we have done. In the same month of November, when we performed this drama, we got all confronted with the big changes the world is going through. And that made the play even more relevant.

It's with great pleasure to write that our collegial connections have expanded substantially. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 Friends of Camphill India co-founded “Avapanam” Forum for Inclusive Social Development in India. “Avapanam” is a Sanskrit word and carries the meaning: “The field in which all offerings are sown.” At present it is a group consisting of eight organisations and several individual

members..( [www.avapanam.in](http://www.avapanam.in) ). Our aim is to introduce and foster curative education and social therapy towards an upgrading of dignity of children and adults with developmental challenges and an upgrading of those individuals who opt to work in the field. Handicaps, unique, unconventional individual features and vocational choices for our field are severely marginalised in India. This needs to change! It is also with this intention that Avapanam has chosen to organise three annual workshops on the theme “Seeds for Social Renewal” by Karl König.

Last January we had the first of this series and Jan Goeschel was the main speaker. He will continue this journey with Avapanam for the next two years as well. And our special world can count on quality changes indeed!

Another important expansion of our connections manifested in 2019. Two of our members went to Camphill Tinh Truc Gia in Vietnam to attend the International Movement gathering and witnessed the inauguration of the Eastern wing region of the Camphill Movement Worldwide. The picture of this meeting is hanging in our office. It was an auspicious moment to witness the completion of Camphill’s circle around the entire globe! It leaves us also with renewed responsibility. To let the Camphill impulse flourish out of the Indian soil, soul and spirit... To add to the Camphill movement from the East! Social renewal has surely an Indian context to deal with and we’re kind of still pioneering... But the beginning has been made!

Having mentioned several aspects of our activities,

we also have to describe us, as part of the new karmic situation of the world. As in all the Camphill communities, the flow of incoming foreign volunteers stopped entirely. Since Christmas 2020 we have only one man from Brazil left with us. In the time since, young Indian people appeared as coworkers. Some college students are from affluent families, but also youngsters from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Practicing social therapy and living an eco-conscious lifestyle became a new educational challenge. New dynamics are needed to weave a team spirit. Although it has been great to receive support from the young volunteers, the weight on the shoulders of the permanent older coworkers increased. We were suddenly “back” to the actual care for the residents. Brushing teeth, bathing, changing clothes, beds, etc. etc... I personally was disappointed with myself, to see how much resistance I felt towards these “old” jobs.... “I have not enough love” I sadly would exclaim to my husband....Many times Karl König’s Good Friday Play came back to my mind... “It’s not my ears that are deaf it is my heart”... The Virus crisis had brought me also into my dragon...I needed to change...release the heart, strengthen the I ... Broaden my capacity to accept the different levels of consciousness, education, ages, social backgrounds which were brought into our community, etc. etc. ... It is so easy to talk about love but to practice it on a mundane level is really challenging. After some weeks of deep struggle I started to feel somehow thankful for losing a bit of my importance to see clearly my heart’s weakness...The virus did also work on me! It’s part of the World’s necessary changes I guess...



My name is Francis Aradhya, married to Anantha Aradhya. He brought me to his home country, India, which has somewhat become my home country too. I have lived in Camphill for the last 32 years and clearly, I'm not done with it: for personal as well as community reasons. But we cannot ignore that Anantha is already 70 and I will be 59 soon. A new kind of energy is needed to carry our South Indian Camphill Impulse into the future. Like we heard in the Camphill research meetings of last December: Our generation is people with will power. The new "Millenium" folks have heart forces, empathy! I surely can recognise this. The young people have a chance to impact the wider society by performing deeds which are so precious towards a new social tapestry. Yet, they need a lot of support and educational input to grow as social therapists as well as a strong sense of integrity, dignity and truth of this field of work. To support the young people in this journey as well as the overall health of our community in this strange time, we could benefit from experienced Camphillers to join us for one or two years. If anyone can hear this call, please contact us.

To help us with the changes in our part of the world...

I hope that my small writings about different aspects of Friends of Camphill India carries some interesting aspects for you readers. As most of you are also Camphillers there are probably many things that don't come as surprises to you but nevertheless I have enjoyed writing this for you. And on behalf of all the members of Camphill India I do send you the warmest of greetings. And to all those people who have supported us in various ways I want to express our gratitude also via this platform!

Francis Aradhya  
Friends of Camphill India (Founded 1999)



[campindia@hotmail.com](mailto:campindia@hotmail.com)  
[www.friendsofcamphillindia.in](http://www.friendsofcamphillindia.in)  
Phone and WhatsApp : 994532674

# Spiritual Care in Everyday Practice

By Angelika Monteux

*Editor's Note: this is the second installment of this article. For the first installment please refer back to the January/February issue of the Correspondence.*

## **The spiritual dimension in everyday practice**

The motto of medieval Christian monks 'Ora et labora'—prayer and work—could be understood in this context as: our practical work is our prayer—investing it with spiritual energy and meaning, and our attempts at self reflection and personal improvement are our work.

Another idea in Social Pedagogy is the 'Common Third'—the meeting each other through a shared activity, using the activity to create a space to encounter each other. This is an encounter on three levels, involving the whole person, facilitated by shared activity. This is where we can see spirituality and encounter actively integrated and manifest in everyday life and practice.

Doing something together, be it craft, work or art can be the best examples of spiritual activity.

What do you do when you make a basket, a candle, a clay pot or cook a soup? You start with an idea, an image of what you want to make; then you use matter, a material to make this idea visible, and then, hopefully, you enjoy the activity and what you have produced, thus engaging body, soul and spirit or in Social Pedagogy terms: head, heart and hands.

All this can of course be done in a completely unspiritual way if you just follow your time table, don't really know why you are doing it, find it boring and think about something else whilst doing it. To transform this into a meaningful, spiritual activity it needs your attention, interest, understanding of the purpose, a focused engagement of your 'whole' being: head, heart and hands, thinking, feeling and will. Then whatever you do can be fun, inspiring and meaningful.

It is equally important to become aware that all activities and daily rituals are more than means to get through the day, to improve skills and record progress, but helpful tools in supporting the spiritual wellbeing of those we care for. A walk can be a source of joy and fun when we can share interest and awareness in how nature changes, flowers turn into seed, different birds can be seen and heard. Craft activities can be made meaningful when it takes time and effort, maybe even frustration to complete an item that is useful and beautiful and can make someone happy. The same holds good for any work done on the land or in the household, all potentially leading to an experience of self worth, joy, inner security and a meaningful relationship to the world around; this in turn can help to reduce anxiety, confusion and feelings of loneliness or anger. Whilst this can be a very inspiring general attitude enriching everyday activities, it also demands an inner wakefulness to catch a moment when something unexpected and unplanned can happen.

An example:

I used to live and work with a young lady suffering from epilepsy and the effects of medication which often led to her being moody, negative and unwilling to join activities or events. One day I saw her drawing a picture of a house on green grass, a blue sky and a sun much like a young child would do. I sat down next to her and asked: "Do you know where the sky is?" She pointed to the blue on her paper. "And where is the grass?" She pointed to the green in her drawing. "No—I mean the real sky!" She looked confused. So I took her outside and pointed up—luckily the sky was blue—and down to the grass.

She was amazed; she seemed to have never actually noticed them before. This experience woke her up to a new interest in the world; she began to look out of the window first thing in the morning to see the sky and learned that it can have many different colours and that the sun can be hidden by clouds. She started to join outdoor activities and to enjoy outings.

This was a one to one situation, but all this can be even more powerful if done together with others, as for example during shared meal times. We can use them just to quickly eat our food, supervise our charges and try to be quick. Or we can engage our neighbour in conversation, point out what we are eating, and explore likes and dislikes—in essence: create a warm and social atmosphere. There is also ample opportunity to informally learn practical and social skills, awareness of what others might need and how they are.

### **Spirituality in community and in the workplace**

This also applies to community living or team work when people can meet around a common aim or task—however simple or lofty it may be—and find the source of inspiration to act together. A common aim or idea can facilitate the coming together of individuals who want to bring this idea into practical life. To come back to Swinton you could see this idea as spirit, and the way a group of individuals relates to and works with it as spirituality.

In this process there will be a great potential for encounters between individuals, and it is in their hands to make them ‘sacred’ and healing or destructive and hostile.

Camphill Communities are what is called ‘Intentional Communities’; this means that they are not based on blood ties, nationality or religion. They are created by individuals who freely chose to come together and unite around a common aim or task. Could this common aim, task be compared to the ‘Common

Third’ around which individuals gather? What matters is not that everyone lives together as in the traditional Camphill settings, but that people feel committed to this shared task whenever they work together. Maybe this was easier in the past when life sharing was the norm, but it is just as possible in shift work patterns; the work is still done in teams, but it will need more effort and interest in each other to create the experience of togetherness

To be successful it needs everyone’s contribution in the same way I mentioned before: interest in, focus on the shared idea, understanding the purpose and importance and a commitment to engage fully in the pursuit of it.

Each Individual needs to have the opportunity to contribute to this in their own way, motivated by the need of others, united on the spiritual level, supported by social and shared cultural activities and working together.

This can open the space where the ‘Spirit,’ the aim and idea can shine and give enthusiasm and strength to the group. Strength and enthusiasm are needed in order to overcome the daily challenges, the differences, the difficulties in oneself and within the group or team and to hold on to each other’s true being when things get difficult.

### **FAITHFULNESS**

Create within you a new, courageous concept of Faithfulness.

What is usually called Faithfulness fades away too quickly.

Let this become your Faithfulness:

You will experience in the other human being moments which pass quickly.

In these moments they will appear to you as though filled and permeated

by the archetype of their spirit being.

Then may come—indeed will come—other moments,  
other long periods.

Then they are clouded.

But you should learn to say in these times:

The spirit makes me strong; I think of the Archetype; I  
saw it once.

No illusion, no delusion can tear it from me.

Wrestle always for the image you once saw.

This striving is Faithfulness.

And in striving for Faithfulness in this way

Human beings will be near to each other as with  
Angel-Guardian Powers. (14)

For more detail and references to research done on  
this topic you can turn to an article written by  
Sebastian and Angelika Monteux: “Human Encounters:  
The Core of Everyday Practice” using the link below:

[https://www.scienceopen.com/document?  
vid=2e4f7649-1132-4e49-a6ef-f8b5fb05c2c0](https://www.scienceopen.com/document?vid=2e4f7649-1132-4e49-a6ef-f8b5fb05c2c0)

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# Tyll Hans van de Voort

1948 – 2020

*“Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives.”*

-Joseph Beuys

Biodynamic gardener, teacher, artist and social pioneer Tyll Van de Voort died on the 9th of October 2020. Anyone who met Tyll will remember his seemingly boundless energy and zeal for life, his sharp intellect, wonderful aesthetic abilities and deep respect for his fellow humans. The sense of order, beauty and abundance in his biodynamic gardens were a unique expression of a unique man.

Tyll was born in Holland and was raised by his mother in Germany. From an early age Tyll was sent to boarding school, only returning home to his mother during school holidays. Later Tyll remembered these times as sorely lacking; the conditions of boarding school missing the warmth and nurture a child needs.

Tyll went on to study fine art and philosophy in Hamburg. Here he was introduced to Joseph Beuys with whom he studied for a semester. Beuys greatly influenced and broadened Tyll's outlook on what art can be. Beuys' notion that an underpinning spiritual structure is needed in forming art is something that Tyll carried into all of his later work as a gardener and a leader in community life.

Tyll met Sybille in 1976 whilst both worked in Hamburg in the creative industries. They quickly developed a deep loving connection. Only weeks into their relationship, Tyll had a serious accident, breaking a frameless heavy mirror over his right arm and cutting it so deeply that he severed all the nerves. Although surgeons saved his right hand, Tyll had to relearn to use his left hand as his dominant one and through remarkable willpower not only learned to write



effortlessly but developed a new unique, flowing cursive style.

After the birth of their first daughter Johanna in 1977, Tyll and Sybille decided to seek an alternative way of life, moving to a land based commune in 1978. Here Tyll began to

gain practical experience in growing, though as he later recalled when he first started, he couldn't distinguish a dandelion from a nettle and didn't know what compost was!

In 1979 he went on to undertake a three-year biodynamic training, starting at Gartnerei Thies near Bremen, a horticultural nursery specializing in vegetables and flowers and then completing his training at Obsthof Mehrens, a biodynamic fruit and vegetable farm in Neumunster. During this period he and Sybille were married and Lisa, their second daughter was born. In conversation Tyll often evoked with a certain reverence those who had trained him; at pruning time he would proudly display a pair of rather antique secateurs that he'd received as a parting gift from his 'master.'

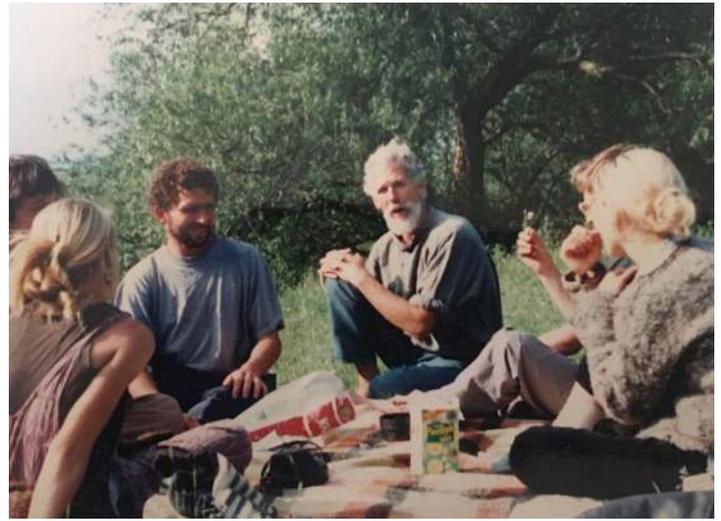
Tyll and Sybille arrived at Oaklands Park Camphill Village in the spring of 1983 and their son Simon soon arrived, followed by their youngest daughter Magdalena in 1987. With their young family, they immersed themselves in community life, both running a house with residents and for Tyll running the vegetable production, initially with Joachim Grundmann. Oaklands Garden became Tyll's palette and he set about animating the landscape as both a place for production, education, social therapy and beauty. Tyll was a tireless worker and leader in the garden, he had an incredible attention to detail. For many a volunteer or apprentice new to the garden his insistence on form was rather perplexing but one soon realised that he was utterly immersed in the garden's annual choreography; the

whole place lived in his etheric body and each detail was important. An uncoiled hose left lying around was an absolute no-no! He showed genuine love and appreciation for the garden team of villagers and often expressed gratitude that they made it possible for us to do this work together. Each of the garden team had their roles, he would see the individuality in each person and find them appropriate tasks. He never wasted peoples time and would often be found in the garden early in the morning or late in the evening preparing work to be one step ahead. Tyll viewed the garden and the community as an enactment of practical love; the more you give, the more you receive in return. The beauty and bounty of the gardens and its produce, the festivals and the community life were all an expression of this ethic.

Soon into his time at Oaklands, Tyll invited apprentices to work with him, recognising the benefit that he had gained in his life under the tutelage of an experienced biodynamic practitioner. Later in his life, Tyll reflected that the real legacy of his biodynamic work was not the gardens that he had overseen, but the forty-five apprentices that he had trained, many of whom had gone on to found horticultural and social projects themselves all over the world.

One of the significant moments in Tyll's life was in 2001 when he co-led the communities' resistance to the contiguous cull of their livestock during the foot and mouth outbreak. The community opposed the cull on the grounds that they had no animals that were infected and blocked the Ministry of Agriculture officials from entering their farm. This made national news and after the officials eventually backed down and the livestock were saved, Tyll went on to write a lyrical assessment of the policy of mass culling for the Guardian newspaper.

In 2009, after 27 years at Oaklands Park, Tyll and Sybille left the community and took up the offer of roles at Ruskin Mill Clervaux in Darlington. Here, Tyll created the foundations of a biodynamic farm and a beautiful garden, specifically designed to help people orientate themselves in space and in place. Although nearing retirement but never one for half measures, Tyll developed several polytunnels, 3 acres of field vegetables and a 2-acre orchard. Alongside this, he brought in and



cared for an array of livestock whilst also working as a Trustee for Ruskin Mill Trust. Sybille continued her craft of weaving and home making and delivered a successful program for young vulnerable mothers combining therapeutic craft with the tranquility and aesthetic of the Clervaux gardens.

In January 2013, Tyll was diagnosed with throat cancer. Several harrowing months ensued as Tyll engaged conventional radiotherapy treatment supported with anthroposophical medicine and strict dietary measures. Through immense mental and physical determination and most of all the courageous support of Sybille, Tyll healed. He bounced back with vigour, though minus his trademark beard (this took several years to grow back following the radiotherapy) and left Clervaux in September 2013 for High Riggs nursery near Sheffield, starting the initial establishment of a biodynamic garden for Ruskin Mill Freeman College.

It was now time for Tyll and Sybille to take their long-awaited retirement and they enjoyed months at a time travelling in their camper van 'Berta' and walking in central and southern Europe. One of their favourite expeditions was walking the Lycian way in Turkey. They also had more time now to spend with their children and grandchildren and when at home in Darlington they would often welcome family and friends.

In October 2014, Tyll received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Biodynamic Association, in acknowledgement of his contribution to biodynamic practice, training and development in the UK. Towards the end of his life he reflected on his chosen career path as a biodynamic gardener. His conviction was unwavering; "should I have my time again I'd be out there working on the land" he stated; "working with the life realm is of the utmost importance for our time."

Tyll was a profoundly hopeful person. Although his initial training was as an artist, in gardening and in community life was where he found his artistic expression; his vision was in creating islands of sanity based on the principles of love, beauty and order.

Tyll is survived by his wife Sybille, children Johanna, Lisa, Simon and Magdalena and grandchildren Diyako, Shanyar and Odessa.

—Ed Berger & Roberto Romano

## COMMUNITY BEAUTY

I, too  
once believed  
that something so beautiful  
could not last  
The way the sun rising  
over our pasture  
sets the sky on fire  
in pink, peach, rose  
and crimson  
is enough  
to slow the flow of time  
and realize  
the presence of an Almighty  
and that beauty  
transforms  
To the intuitive Madonna  
who paused  
long enough for me to catch up  
To the sustained, uncontrolled  
laughter about polenta with friends  
To a rest hour shared  
on a woodland bench  
discussing personality types  
To the strong-willed elder  
who gave me the space  
to come undone  
To the bonfire built  
to keep me company  
and send forth intentions  
into the universe  
To the gentleman  
who carried me home  
when my mind-numbing  
overindulgence  
buckled me at the knees  
To an eternal friendship  
made even stronger  
through trust  
and vulnerability  
in a passing moment  
of discomforting revelation  
Embracing all the imperfections,  
mistakes, mishaps, faults,  
cracks and scars  
There is lasting beauty  
and an Almighty presence  
in every aspect of it.

Todd Mason

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**Office:** 2542 Route 66, Chatham, NY 12037 (Camphill Ghent)

Phone: (518) 721-8423 (US only).

Editor: Billy Shannon

Publisher: Nathan McLaughlin

Layout and Design: Phil Balabala

Adviser: David Andrew Schwartz

Subscriptions: Onat Sanchez-Schwartz



*The Dove Logo of the Camphill movement is a symbol of the pure, spiritual principle which underlies the physical human form. Uniting soon after conception with the hereditary body, it lives on unimpaired in each human individual. It is the aim of the Camphill movement to stand for this 'Image of the Human Being' as expounded in Rudolf Steiner's work, so that contemporary knowledge of the human being may be enflamed by the power of love. Camphill Correspondence tries to facilitate this work through free exchange within and beyond the Camphill movement. Therefore, the Staff of Mercury, the sign of communication which binds the parts of the organism into the whole, is combined with the Dove in the logo of Camphill Correspondence.*