

The Tale of the Tenth Farmer

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Johanna Paungger-Poppe and Thomas Poppe have co-authored several books on the influence of natural and lunar rhythms on daily life. Probably best-known are “Vom richtigen Zeitpunkt” (UK Edition: “The Art of Timing”, Random House UK/ US Edition: “The Power of Timing”, Amazon) “Aus eigener Kraft” (UK and US edition: “Moon Time”, Random House UK) “Alles erlaubt!” and “Der lebendige Garten,” all of which appear regularly on the non-fiction bestseller lists. To date, 16 million copies of their books and calendars have been sold. They have been translated into 24 languages.

Between 1991 (after publication of ‘Guided by the Moon’) and 2001 the number of organic farmers in the German-speaking countries has increased tenfold. The books and this tale played their part in the development.

*The “Tale of the Tenth Farmer” has been written one night in reply to a letter asking about “The State of Modern Agriculture”. Please pass it on if you like it. Johanna & Thomas have moved to the USA to be more accessible for their US readership. The author’s website: www.paungger-poppe.com. Their Blog: www.wisdom-keeper.com
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Once upon a time, less than a thousand miles from here, there lived a farmer who was widely known for walking his very own and distinctive path. Blessed with special abilities, the gift of foresight and in-depth perception, he could see all things ‘together’ as it were – summer and winter; wet fields and dry steppes; rich harvests and lean years; useful plants and pests. Behind all the opposites and contradictions he perceived the unity, the connecting force, the hidden meaning behind the ostensibly meaningless. That every dark night had a dawn was a familiar reality to him.

His actions were imbued with a deep love for everything that was alive and flourishing, that breathed and ripened. ‘Nature’ for him was just another word for ‘God’s gifts’. He always interpreted the words ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the

earth and subdue it' as a call for togetherness and gratefulness, not an instruction to conquer and exploit.

He was proud that he was able to live his life as a farmer, and this too he experienced as a kind of gift, an almost undeserved privilege, despite of all the hard work. His deep humility and unobtrusive friendliness in daily life bore witness to his feeling that fate had treated him favorably. He was a calm island in a troubled sea, a sea that waited anxiously whether the storm on the horizon was going to pass without harm – or not. He was at peace with himself.

He was inspired by a limitless curiosity for all things between heaven and earth, a curiosity that is innate in all of us if only we give it space to unfold. 'A hundred years from now we'll have enough time to sleep', he kept saying to his family, if they looked at him yet again with wide eyes because he wanted to try out something new – a special breed, a new technique, a new application of ancient knowledge.

Some people who didn't know him very well found him a little peculiar, for he clearly could see the future in many respects. Most of all he could sense the truth behind the appearance, the real behind the façade; he could recognize the truth behind the lies and the propaganda. He himself found this ability a bit of a mystery, for it revealed itself almost always as a quiet voice in his left ear. This quiet voice interpreted for the 'Tenth Farmer' (as we are going to call him) directly and in simple words what the person addressing him really wanted to say. 'My little interpreter friend' he called this voice when talking to it. It also made him feel as if he could see the invisible strings that other people were attached to when they spread lies or when, directed by invisible clients or rulers, they gave speeches. If the respective person he was listening to was sincere then the interpreter was silent, or he murmured quietly 'That's really beautiful.' Yet if the farmer had to listen to lies or irrational babbling, the voice immediately helped him to understand what he had heard. Sometimes that turned out to be very funny, because the little friend in his ear started babbling at once, for

example when somebody started a sentence with ‘You are right, but...’ Without fail the voice would murmur immediately, ‘He means NO.’

Many times the interpreter friend saddened the farmer, *because* of the fact that he was told the motives of the person he was dealing with – hidden behind the nice words. He couldn’t go to the butcher’s, who greeted him with a friendly ‘Good morning? How are you today?’ without the interpreter immediately offering help in understanding. *He said: Hopefully this tightwad buys a bit more today than usual...* Sometimes the farmer wished that the friend in his ear would treat himself to a holiday. Yet the interpreter remained his fate and a loyal companion upon whom he could rely at all times.

Our short tale starts on the day when the Ten Farmers of the Big Valley gathered in the village pub, to accept the invitation of a traveling salesman to listen to his talk. Our friend, the Tenth Farmer, came too, to hear about what was new in the world. The stranger with a sleek city look introduced himself as THE SALESMAN and told them that he had come to proclaim the dawn of a blessed ‘New Era’ and to lend a helping hand to the farmers of this dreamy almost forgotten corner of the world, so that the farming community too could join in the general progress of mankind.

He stood up in front of the farmers, beside a table on which there was the only accessory that he had apparently brought with him – a jet-black shiny top hat turned up side down.

Hints of curiosity, hidden skepticism, a facade of coolness – all these feelings could be read on the faces of the farmers. Before even a word was spoken the salesman put his hand into the hat and pulled out a heavy paper bag that probably weighed forty pounds. With a practiced sweep he ripped it open, scooped up a handful of small, bluish, glittering, strong smelling grains, looked triumphantly at the farmers and hummed in a gentle baritone, pregnant with

meaning, 'Gentlemen, we have found the final solution for all your problems...*artificial fertilizer!*'

In this moment the interpreter friend raised his voice in the head of the tenth farmer and murmured insistently, 'He means: I have found the final solution for my own problems and those of my masters. Fast food for your plants.'

Nine farmers listened motionlessly, the tenth farmer leaned his head slightly to one side. After a precisely monitored artificial break the salesman continued, 'A magic potion, the elixir of the new epoch – it doubles the speed of the growing time of your crops, it doubles the size of your crops but does not double your profit, no, it triples it! Yes, with it you can now bring in the harvest twice a year! O yes, it has its price but with these golden prospects you won't begrudge the few pieces of silver. And on top of that we will solve the problem of hunger in the world with it.'

The interpreter got in touch immediately and whispered into the farmer's ear what the salesman really had said, 'We have manufactured it, now we want to sell it. And preferably more and more every year. We are not interested in anything else.'

Nine farmers whispered amongst themselves, got shiny eyes and rubbed their hands. The tenth farmer however got up and asked to speak. With a calm and firm voice he said, 'Nature loves us and cares about us, as we are all able to experience every day. Force-feeding and overfeeding of the plants, as you are suggesting here, will lead to inevitable consequences. Nature, in her wisdom, will recognize these over-sized, weak and lifeless fruits as an artificial product, as diseased and disease inducing. She will, in her wisdom and generosity, stand up immediately and defend herself in our name. She will take exact and balanced countermeasures and respond with many plants and small animals. What we call 'weeds' and 'pests' are beings designed by nature to counteract your actions and

ensure a healthy balance of the soil and in our body and destroy such fruits. Why start a war against nature when we already know the consequences?’

The nine farmers fidgeted uncomfortably on their chairs, embarrassed by the blunt talk of the tenth farmer. The salesman however put on a gentle smile and said, ‘Don’t worry, Sir, we have been aware of that for a long time, we’ve prepared for that.’ Once more he reached deeply into the top hat and pulled out several tins, packets and sprays, their labels displaying few words in bold print but a lot of small print, and on each one of them a skull.

‘With this you’ll destroy in no time any pests and weeds that want to rob you of the fruits of your efforts and investments. Economical to use, cost effective to purchase.’

The interpreter didn’t hesitate for a minute, ‘We create a problem, we make a profit from the problem, we search for a solution, we make a profit from the search for the solution, we fight the symptom, we make a profit from fighting the symptom, we create new problems, we make a profit from the solution of the new problems. A lot of money, a lot of profit!’

Nine farmers murmured appreciative words faced with this wisdom and foresight, but the tenth farmer said, ‘Agricultural crops grown in that way lack any inner life that the human being needs. Everything is lacking, these crops are not only not food, in the long run they are poison.’ The salesman was obviously well prepared and had only been waiting for these words. He reached into the top hat and pulled out a handful of colorful little tins and boxes. ‘But no problem! The same excellent companies that supply you with the fertilizers and pesticides have done decades of brilliant research work. They have designed wonderful food supplements that counterbalance any deficiencies. And from this a beautiful new order is created. You can keep your prices low, stay competitive and on top of that create some jobs in the chemical industry. That will let you sleep without feeling guilty, won’t it?’

The interpreter went to work and reported the true words of the salesman and his clients, 'For decades we did brilliant research work and designed food supplements to counterbalance the deficiencies that we created ourselves. Supplements that recreate what we destroyed. Except that they will never recreate it completely, ongoing deficiencies are thus built-in. We know exactly how deficiencies are turned into gold. Our gold, your anesthetic.'

Nine farmers nodded in agreement – and showed some indignation when the tenth farmer addressed them again and asked them to think again. 'All these pesticides collect in the crops, in the earth, the water, the air, in the animals, in the body of the human being and make us ill. The body is not able to recognize the food supplements, apart from a few exceptions, so the deficiencies remain and make the body fat and addicted in its constant struggle to distil essential life substance from the empty fruits.' The salesman nodded with understanding and pulled a giant sack of colorful boxes of medicines from the top hat and said in a patronizing tone, 'This is all known and understood, we are prepared for it, Sir. The companies that bring you fertilizers, pesticides and food supplements have not been lazy. They did not spare any trouble or cost and found out through years of expensive research how to deal with all the little aches and pains and the allergies and excess weight. As you can see, we thought of everything.' His face exuded the joy that somebody experiences who does good work, who blossoms with it and is certain that he benefits mankind.

According to the interpreter these were the true words of the salesman, 'We make a profit from the destruction, we make a profit from the rebuilding, but we only rebuild partially, so that we are then able to make a profit from the constant repairs. Fighting the symptom is the magic answer.'

The nine farmers felt this inner power and were satisfied. The tenth farmer said in a quiet but firm voice, 'Your medicines only cure the symptoms of the disease, nobody gets well with them, and on top of that the side effects are killing us. Why have expensive cures when it is so easy to avoid disease?'

The salesman's hand had already disappeared into the top hat before the tenth farmer could finish his sentence. 'Here are the new medicines that keep all the side effects of the old medicines in check and wipe them out – in some cases before they even appear!' he shouted triumphantly to the assembled group.

The interpreter did not tire to proclaim the true words of the salesman, 'We make a profit from the destruction, we make a profit from the rebuilding, but we only rebuild partially, so that we are then able to make a profit from the constant repairs.'

Before the tenth farmer could take a breath the salesman reached once more into the top hat and brought out a most delightful small wooden model, painted colorfully and handcrafted with great skill. On the left side it showed a wonderfully diverse landscape of smallholdings, as it once graced our country, and on the right side it showed the land that the salesman had to offer – a before and after model so-to-speak. The "before" side was adorned with winding glittering streams, beaming with crabs and fish, edged with trees and shrubs, a joyful quilt of multicolored fields with little forests, clearings, heaps of stones, and hedges etc. A small paradise. The other, the modern, progressive "after" side, however, only contained a few big areas, perfectly straight concreted watercourses, asphalt paths, right angles, huge tractors whose weight deeply ploughed into and hurt the field and forest soils; monotony as far as the eye could see.

'THAT is the wonderful future! Huge areas for fast and easy working, space for large machinery, much higher yields. And by the way, you can recycle your moon calendars. You no longer have to pay attention to the rhythms of

nature or the moon, in a few years these will end up in the realm of the old-fashioned and superstitious.'

The interpreter started work immediately and showed the salesman in his true light, 'We make a profit from the destruction; we make a profit from the rebuilding. The working in tune with lunar rhythms is old hat! The chemical and the agricultural industries can afford to ignore their influence. Because provisions are made for all kinds of damages. This system is fool proof. We make a profit from success; we make a profit from failure.'

And once more he reached into the top hat and pulled out governmental aid grants worth billions and numerous scientific papers that laid out in detail and "proved" the value and thinking behind these operations and changes, like the reparcelling of the agricultural land, redirecting of rivers, and deforestation – without giving anybody a chance to voice doubts, and in a scientific jargon for which unfortunately at that time no interpreter could be found.

Nine farmers sat there with shining eyes – and got angry when the tenth farmer got up to speak again, 'And what about the unavoidable soil erosion and destruction, the over-acidification that turns fertile land into a desert, and the inevitable floods, the high costs of machinery maintenance, the disaster avoidance and damage reparations, let alone the destruction of the habitats of animals?'

'No problem,' the salesman said unflustered, 'science of course worked hard to be in control of all these things too.'

The interpreter, 'We create the problem and make a profit from it, we work out a solution and make a profit from it, we delay a true solution as long as possible and make a profit from it.'

Once again he reached into the top hat and pulled out governmental grant promises worth billions and numerous scientific papers that proved the reasoning behind the restoration of the natural beds of the rivers and streams and the removal of the parceling up of the agricultural land, again without letting doubts being voiced and in words that none of the farmers understood.

In addition the salesman distributed forms for special loan applications that were about half a percent below the one generally available at the time.

The tenth farmer said in a firm voice, 'If we farm like that we will also destroy the ground water! Where shall clean water come from?'

The salesman laughed out, 'You don't really believe that we haven't found a solution for that, do you? It is simply ingenious and ingeniously simple. After intensive research and study of our statistics we simply raised the limits for toxins in the water. Because we found out that only a few people, especially sensitive people, mostly children, reacted to the minimally contaminated water. Yes, and then there is one more possibility,' and he pulled out of the top hat a very heavy and complicated device designed for purifying water that could turn any water, after using a lot of energy, into a lifeless and sterile liquid.

The interpreter recited in a by now almost bored voice the true words of the salesman, 'We create the problem and make a profit from it, we work on the solution and make a profit from it, we delay a true solution as long as possible, and make a profit from it. Nobody needs to know that sterile water is lifeless water.'

The tenth farmer said, 'This farming method will result in the development of dangerous and resistant bacteria, immune to all pesticides and antibiotics.'

The salesman nodded and said magnanimously, 'I thank you for this objection, but again that really is no problem! Our ingenious genetic researchers have developed wholly new cultivated plants that certainly won't get any disease, as all

research and trial crops have shown. And we guarantee you that you can purchase their seeds from us anew every year.'

The interpreter showed no mercy and said truthfully what the salesman kept silent about, 'We create a huge problem and make a vast profit from it, we work for decades on the solution and make a vast profit from it, we delay a true solution as long as possible, and make an outrageous profit from it. And the most beautiful: Some damages are irreversible. It is only THESE that are the basis for continuous profit.'

The tenth farmer, 'In thirty years at best will it be possible to see the effects of these plants on the environment, the human beings and animals. Nearly all of these plants have been proven to be damaging also for beneficial insects. The bees are already leaving us. Why then take such a risk today?'

The salesman waved him aside, 'But where is your pioneer spirit that you are known for? No progress without risk. If it works, then the profit is many times higher than using conventional methods, isn't it?'

The interpreter made short work of the salesman's words and clarified them, 'Appeal to their pride and my cashbox keeps ringing.'

The tenth farmer interrupted, 'It should be left to the individual whether he wants to volunteer as a guinea pig for this experiment.' The salesman, 'For heaven's sake, where is your knowledge of human nature? If that were the case nobody would take part! If slaughterhouse walls were made of glass nobody would eat meat, eh? No, sometimes you have to force people to do what's best for them. A big advantage by the way is consistent quality!'

The interpreter repeated the deeper meaning behind the words of the salesman, 'Appeal to their pride and the cashbox keeps ringing.'

The tenth farmer remained unflustered, 'We no longer are able to grow our own seeds as we have done for thousands of years but are forced to buy the hybrid plants again and again.' The salesman did not turn a hair, 'That is no problem, dear Sir; the disadvantage is your advantage! First of all you will always get the latest model of our gene factory, guaranteed! Secondly we have of course spoken to our close friends in the banks, who offer favorable loans for temporary emergencies. Your co-operatives and unions are also lined up to support you, that's what they are there for, aren't they?'

The interpreter repeated, 'Appeal to their need for security and the cashbox keeps ringing.'

The tenth farmer, 'These sterile, unproductive plants are not true foods, because they are infertile, their inner life force has been destroyed. They weaken the human being.' The salesman shouted, 'Good thought but not thought through! Thank God we have left the Middle Ages behind and unbiased scientists have revealed this to be baseless.'

The interpreter clarified what the salesman may not have said but meant, 'For such objections we have our scientists, paid by us, who will without doubt declare this to be superstition, as ordered by us. It's true that everybody experiences for himself that these studies do not portray the reality, yet what every layman can see and feel doesn't count in science – and that suits us, not only in this case.'

Without waiting for an answer he reached again into the top hat, 'And here is the Holy Grail for the brave animal breeders amongst you! No more toil growing your own animal feed – instead concentrated feed, clean silo feed, hen-batteries and power stables.' Like small little building blocks samples of tiny stable-models tumbled over the table and had the nine farmers amazed and murmuring appreciatively.

The interpreter clarified the words behind the scenes, 'The salesman means that you should buy this stuff, and thus you'll have fallen into their trap! For this feed makes the animals sick, it weakens them and on top of that it makes them addicted to his products!'

The tenth farmer did not give up, 'What effect will that have on the quality of our products, when we work like that? The animals will then have to be tranquilized and treated with a lot of medicines. Who then can still accept responsibility that his meat and milk will be safe? Who pays the doctors' fees of the consumers? What about the animals and their welfare? These are sentient and intelligent beings! Livestock farming methods which are appropriate for each species are not a luxury but a necessity, if we want to farm humanely.'

The salesman stayed calm. 'I've told you already that we've developed excellent medicines against all those complaints. The problem is illusory. You can trust in science unconditionally.'

The interpreter was immediately present and repeated the true thoughts of the salesman's employer, 'None of that is worth thinking about compared to the enormous profits and advantages! After all nobody knows that the paralyzing tiredness that befalls people after consuming such non-foods comes from these products. There are plenty of remedies – from the ever-present coffee to various freely available drugs. All of them a marvelous staple creating ongoing profits for the same companies that bring you all these blessings.'

The tenth farmer sighed and said in a quiet voice, 'I can assure you that none of us will be able to sleep soundly any longer if we are made to become a small cog in this devilish machine! I certainly couldn't look myself in the mirror in the morning.'

The salesman even had an answer to this and brought forth from the top hat a big pile of glossy brochures and medical insurance advertisements that he handed to the farmers to look at. 'We have known all that for a long time! And we have made provisions. Here you are, to cheer you up. Too much pessimism is unhealthy after all! It gives you wrinkles!' And he laughed cheerfully and encouragingly.

The interpreter took an audible breath and started again to explain the words of the salesman, 'We have made good provisions. Our advertising agencies around the world persuade the consumer, day after day, that sugar is healthy, that your meat is healthy, that white flour and milk are healthy, that fertilizers and pesticides are harmless, that genetic engineering and cloning are great ideas. Although there have been proofs for the opposite for a long time now. And as there are hardly any scientists left who aren't paid by us, the number of research projects that find out the truth will be very limited and hardly find distribution. And should they succeed after all, they will be labeled annoying and out-dated. You will have to look hard in this climate of extensive and intensive information politics to find somebody who is not impressed by it! Yes, and concerning your pangs of conscience, we have the FDA, the EU, the farmers' unions and the medical insurers on our side. Not only do they pay for the physical damages resulting from the use of the pesticides and the consumption of your own products, they also pay for gentle persuasion, to help you take your mind off these things.'

The nine farmers were satisfied, but the tenth took a deep breath, 'That's unconditional dependence that you want us to submit to, darkest slavery. Dependence on the banks, on the politicians, who have never even visited a farm, on scientists, on the pharmaceutical industry, on governmental grants, on the producers of seeds, on mechanical engineering companies, on subsidies, on pension payments, on medical insurers, on veterinary surgeons, on

psychotherapists who have to calm our conscience. Nobody will be any longer his own master.'

The salesman lowered his gaze. 'Why do you paint everything black? We see security and progress. I see integration, globalization and joyful togetherness for the benefit of everyone. Everybody will be looking after you and care for your well-being. After all you are looking after our daily bread in return, and to top it all you will secure numerous jobs!'

The interpreter spoke for a last time to bring to light the salesman's hidden intentions. 'Yes, okay, you are right. But who cares? Apart from that we need sugar, white flour and milk powder in order to send the worthless stuff to the developing countries and cement their physical and spiritual dependence. Otherwise everything would be much more expensive in our countries!'

The salesman spoke the last sentence movingly with a little tremor in his voice, so that the nine farmers felt very flattered. For it was they who would keep alive this wonderful cycle, this system of producing constipating-bloating- filling food, money and jobs. They felt proud.

After the salesman composed himself once more, he reached into the top hat for a last time and pulled out a small flute. He started to play it quietly – and following the melody and rhythm of an ancient song the farmers stood up one by one and followed the salesman. They had “decided voluntarily” to follow him, every one of them according to his own special motive.

One liked the idea to be finally seen as “progressive” and not only as an “ignorant peasant”.

The second one was moved by greed for money and possessions and subsidies, for he had heard that you could even get paid for doing nothing and leaving your fields lie fallow.

The third farmer didn't want to confess that he hardly understood any of the salesman's gibberish. He joined in because 'the majority is always right'.

The fourth farmer had to feed a big family. He was motivated by the fear that his farm might founder and the word "dependence" sounded in his ears more like a promise than a threat.

The fifth farmer had wanted to prove to the entire world, most of all to his parents, that he was "good for something". Self doubt brought him into the arms of the salesman.

The sixth farmer trusted blindly in any form of "scientific knowledge" and already as a child had given up to listen to the inner voice that could save us all.

The seventh farmer let himself be impressed by the authoritarian self-confident manner of the salesman. Whoever had the courage to put a show like that couldn't be wrong.

The eighth farmer followed the salesman, because he feared to be left standing alone, and the questions of the tenth farmer seemed too cheeky and lacking respect that he could imagine to choose someone like him as a travel companion.

The ninth farmer followed the salesman because the sound of the flute enchanted him. He thought by himself, 'How very beautiful. Anybody making music like that is worthy of my trust, for only a good soul expresses itself through music.'

The tenth farmer stayed on his chair and watched in thoughtful silence as the other nine farmers and the salesman left single file. Then he got up, returned to his farm, and continued to practice his golden craft according to natural methods. Growing fruits and vegetables that carried all the power of the living earth within. True food for life, keeping human beings healthy and making them healthy. Supported by the positive thoughts of the people who valued his work – the families in the valley who had decided to get their supplies exclusively from him. ‘And if the world would end tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today.’

Dear reader, do you want to help the Tenth Farmer? Nothing, absolutely nothing, is easier than that. For with every decision in daily life concerning what to cook or eat you either help the tenth farmer and make sure that there will be farmers like him around in the future. And make sure that we *have* a future. Or you decide upon another ‘future’, the omens of which we can read about every day in the newspapers, and whose consequences we see in our bodies and in the wallets of the medical profession. These are the alternatives. It’s up to you.