What is biodynamics: farming or philosophy?

It is helpful to think of biodynamics not primarily as an agricultural system, but rather as an altered philosophy or worldview that then impacts on the practice of agriculture in various ways. In other words, to farm biodynamically, first you have to think biodynamically.

It has its roots in a series of lectures delivered by Austrian philosopher-scientist Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Steiner's life mission was to bridge the gap between the material and spiritual worlds through the philosophical method. To this end, he created the 'spiritual science' of anthroposophy, which he used as the basis of the Waldorf school system that persists to this day.

It was only quite late in Steiner's life that he turned to agriculture: his eight lectures, entitled *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, were delivered just a year before his death, but they remain as the foundation of biodynamic farming.

Key to biodynamics is considering the farm in its entirety as a living system. To this end, biodynamic farms are supposed to be closed, self-sustaining systems. Biodynamics also sees the farm in the context of the wider pattern of lunar and cosmic rhythms. In this holistic view, the soil is seen not simply as a substrate for plant growth, but as an organism in its own right. The idea of using synthetic fertilisers or pesticides is thus an anathema to biodynamic practitioners. Instead, they use a series of special preparations to enhance the life of the soil, which are applied at appropriate times in keeping with the rhythms of nature. And disease is seen not as a problem to be tackled head-on, but rather as a symptom of a deeper malaise within the farm 'organism': correct the problem in the system and the disease will right itself.

1 Match these words with their synonyms.

a. To bridge the gap	☐	**1.** Configuration
b. Key to	☐	**2.** Physical discomfort
c. In its entirety	☐	**3.** Faced
d. Pattern	☐	**4.** Professional
e. Thus	☐	**5.** To remedy a deficiency
f. Practitioner	☐	**6.** The most important thing
g. To enhance	☐	**7.** Directly
h. Tackled	☐	**8.** Completely
i. Head-on	☐	**9.** To improve
j. Malaise	☐	**10.** Therefore



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