

Organic Agriculture: The First Medicine of Holistic Healing
By Michael W Fox D.Sc., Ph.D., Vet. Med., MRCVS

We human beings are surely at the time in our biological evolution when we must reflect upon the direction our lives and civilization have been taking and where we are going. We are at a crossroads, and we must choose which road to take, using common sense and compassion as guide and compass. The road to healing begins when we all feel deep concern for the suffering that surrounds and suffuses us all with the darkness of a dying planet. We have made the Earth so sick, and ourselves in the process, because we have lost touch with the sacred dimensions of reality, Nature, of wholeness, balance, harmony, health and spiritual well-being.

We are so spiritually disconnected that we find reason to put our own genes into pigs so that we can use their hearts and other organs to replace our own diseased hearts and other organs harmed by our excessive consumption of animals and pollution of the environment and our vital food chain.

We are so cognitively disconnected from reality that we spray poisonous chemicals on the crops we feed to our children and rationalize such stupidity as the best and most efficient way to feed a hungry world and even to protect wildlife and biodiversity.

We are so emotionally disconnected from other animals that for economic reasons we justify incarcerating livestock in the cruel, intensive confinement systems of factory farming, and accept the suffering of other animals in vivisection laboratories in the name of medical progress. To question this pathology of anthropocentrism is not to put animals or Nature before people, but rather to demand a full ethical and economic accounting of those activities, values and policies that are harmful to the life community.

We think we are wise to take selenium, zinc, beta carotenoids, lysine, omega 3 fatty acid, vitamin E and C and other essential vitamins and trace mineral supplements. Because they are deficient in most of the foods we eat that do not come from certified organic farming systems, the produce from which have no such serious deficiencies.

But this taking of nutritional supplements/nutraceuticals, is not real healing. It is yet another quick “fix” that the American Medical Association tried to monopolize and obliterate in 1995, for the pharmaceutical industry. Organic farming is the ultimate antidote and first medicine since, unlike conventional chemical-based agriculture, it does not deplete soils and crops, and farmed animals and us, of these essential elements. But the herbal and mineral medicines of indigenous peoples and wisdom of midwives and shamans, like that of organic farmers, are threatened by expropriation, and will soon be subject to corporate exploitation and abuse.

A few years ago I was scheduled to give a major address on animal rights, agriculture and human well being at the University of Rochester, in Minnesota, home of the famed Mayo Hospital. Interestingly no bookstore in the city had any of my books for sale, that had been requested by the graduate student organizers prior to my lecture. They were embarrassed and angry, and told me that it was the doing of the “Mayo people.” State livestock and agribusiness interests were also involved. This alliance is now beginning to break apart as study after study shows the health benefits and economic savings of humane and sustainable organic agriculture, and doctors—as well as veterinarians—are

advocating the adoption of organically raised, whole (unrefined, unadulterated, and unprocessed), foods.

Like the good holistic healer, the organic farmer treats the soil with the same reverential respect and nurturing compassionate understanding as the good veterinarian treats animals. But as the power of pesticides has replaced the wisdom of the farmer, so over-the-counter drugs, computers and gene-jockeys have replaced the eyes of a good stockman and the services of the livestock veterinarian. All these substitutions are costly inputs that have a multiplier effect that undermines the economic sustainability of farming enterprises that are being sacrificed as the off-farm sector of agribusiness reaps more profits from their products and services.

When industry and corporate America adopt the principles of bioethical responsibility, as exemplified by farmers who follow the ethics and scientific principles of humane, sustainable organic agriculture, and consumers and legislators support them exclusively and “eat with conscience,” we will experience such healing that we will soon need no dietary supplements, like zinc and calcium, or vitamins C and E. We will have fewer cancers, heart attacks, osteoporosis, arthritis, allergies, food poisonings, babies with birth defects and children with neurological, cognitive and emotional disorders. And fewer obese cats and dogs that develop cancer, arthritis, chronic skin, liver, kidney, endocrine, immune system and a host of other diseases, many of which can be alleviated and prevented with better nutrition and purer foods.

We won't need to make animals suffer in laboratories to find cures for these diseases of Western civilization: Or need pigs as organ donors. Nor will we need to legitimize the creation of transgenic animals that carry and suffer our genetic disorders to serve as profitable models for developing new drugs to treat the myriad diseases we have brought upon ourselves from cancer and chemo-sensitivity to immuno-suppression and auto-immune diseases. The replacement of animal-based foods with plant-based foods could result in an 80-90 percent reduction in cancer, according to Colin Campbell, Professor of Nutritional Biochemistry at Cornell University. A vegetarian diet is the best way for people to beat the obesity, diabetes, stroke and heart attack epidemic that is sweeping across the consumptive West to other counties that adopt the Western diet and methods of industrial agriculture. Grass fed, organic, and free range animal produce, from beef and chicken to eggs and cheese, are more nutritious, and ethically more acceptable than the produce from animals incarcerated in cruel, and environmentally harmful factory feedlots and confinement sheds. That some large corporations have co-opted the organic label for animal produce that comes from animals kept in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) is a significant concern. A cardinal principle of organic animal agriculture is animals' behavioral freedom and related ecological role in farming sustainably. This means that for dairy products to qualify as organic, simply feeding the cows organic feed and restricting the use of various drugs are insufficient criteria. The cows must have access to pasture and play an integral role most of the year in the ecology and economy of bioregionally appropriate farming systems. These criteria clearly make the 'organic' claims of mega, 2,000-10,000 dairy cowherds, patently false. CAFOs are anathema to organic farming.

Several studies have shown that organic farming practices are good for wildlife, and help in the recovery of regional biodiversity.

When some problem arises, as in our own health or in the health of our animals or the productivity of our crops and livestock, our perceptions are so limited and our motivation so often self-serving that we seek simple solutions — stronger antibiotics and other drugs and vaccines, or genetically engineered, disease resistant seeds and stock — rather than correcting the underlying systemic causes. The expediency of simple solutions, often touted as miracles of scientific progress, serve the short-term, profit-oriented interests of the industrial system. The core systemic dysfunctions and causal agents are not addressed, only the symptoms being treated. Bad medicine and bad farming practices go hand in hand. Like holistic medicine, organic farming is systemically integrated within the physical parameters of general systems theory and quantum mechanics as they relate to dynamic living ecosystems, with the overlays of ethics, esthetics, and metaphysics.

The pathogenic status quo maintained by the food and drug mafia is for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many. That is why my books in Rochester MN were seen as a threat to the establishment which, because of its complexity of interdependent vested interests, is slow to change and to ever reach a consensus that could lead to reforms. But this status-quo is crumbling, however, as people change their diets, rather than taking drugs to lower their cholesterol levels, farmers turn to biological or natural methods of pest control, and human and non-human doctors adopt a more holistic approach to disease treatment and prevention for their patients..

Collectively, we fear to embrace uncertainty and seek control, instead of understanding complexity. We have no conception or resonant heart for concord and harmony with the life community. We slaughter dolphins, wolves, trees, and still even each other.

Our choice is either to extinguish this way of life or to extinguish all life that has no utility, no commercial value.

The less we cause animals to suffer, the less we will suffer. The less we harm Nature – the “environment” – the less we will harm ourselves, because, we and all life are connected ecologically, physically, psychologically and spiritually.

That most human diseases have a spiritual aspect has been long recognized by traditional healers. Conventional medicine does not address the spiritual, emotional, attitudinal, socio-ecological and economic dimensions of our dis-ease, or the many diseases of industrial civilization. It cannot be, so long as it is ideologically, economically and politically part of the industrial system that it serves and services. It is a medicine that cannot prevent disease or heal, even the rich who can afford its ever more costly interventions, so long as it can justify its Professors of Progress and Experimental Surgery, removing the hearts of baboons and replacing them with the hearts of genetically-humanized pigs to see how long they might live before the monkey’s immune systems predictably rejected these hearts. And when gene-juggling biotechnologists play god, putting insect toxin and herbicide resistant, antibiotic marker, and human antibody genes into new varieties of common food crops and then claim that these unique patented creations are ‘substantially equivalent’ to conventional crops, rather than biological aberrations.

What great step forward might such experiments on fellow creatures make for humanity? Is it not yet another backward step into the self-destructive morass of our once noble species turning into a global parasite, if not a plague on life more pernicious than AIDS?

Such animal abuse and cruelty is endorsed by the Catholic Church,' if it is justifiable in terms of definite benefit to humanity'. This human-centered world view is embraced by the ruling bio-technocracy of the industrialized Western and Northern hemispheres to sanctify the commodization of animals and the wholesale, commercialized rape of what is left of the natural world.

The Eastern and Southern hemispheres are ensnared by the same pre-Copernican anthropocentrism of industrial progress and economic growth that is to be attained regardless of the suffering of others, of the holocaust of the animal kingdom, the death of Nature, and the demise of indigenous peoples and their once sustainable methods of farming and way of life.

We cannot put our faith and hopes in scientific discoveries that eventually prove how important the micro-organisms in the soil are for our crops to be healthy and our food nutritious: Or in new breakthroughs in agricultural and medical biotechnology. At best, it will be too little, too late. More instrumental knowledge and technological advances will be to little avail if we do not shift the operational paradigm from anthropocentrism to a more reverential Earth or Creation-centered worldview. This is a systemic transformation that begins with increasing public and political support for humane, sustainable and organic farming practices, and with holistic and preventive health care maintenance.

We have yet to see that most of our diseases are not simply physical in nature, but also have a metaphorical aspect that has to do with our state of being and relationships with each other and with the Earth. The deterioration of our immune systems, for example, mirror social and emotional stress and also the deterioration of the environment, of community values, and of the economy. That more holistically-oriented physicians are at last beginning to recognize these connections is a clear sign that a paradigm shift or change in our worldview is taking place and that the status-quo of conventional medicine, agriculture, the economy, and other social institutions is no longer acceptable. As more medical and veterinary scientists are becoming real healers, so more farmers are becoming real land-stewards. Their paradigm is based upon the following bioethical principles: compassion, humility, ahimsa (avoiding causing harm), reverential respect for all life; social justice; eco-justice, and the precautionary principle. These are the cornerstones of a healthy community and of a sustainable economy.

Advances in the science and bioethics of alternative human and veterinary medicine and agriculture that are based on this new paradigm hold much promise and should be supported by the corporate sector as well as by academia, the public and their governments worldwide.

The death of Nature will mean the death of humanity, since our humanity is derivative of the natural world, and has no primacy either in origin or in significance. There is nothing miraculously different separating the existence of ants and earthworms from mice and men. All are different manifestations of being, of the life force. None is more significant, in itself, than any other in contributing to the diversity and dynamic harmony of the life process and community. It is from this perspective of a reverential respect for all life and for its community, that through communion, the time of healing and hallowing will begin. This is a spiritual and ethical imperative, and a survival necessity for the human

species in these times and at this stage in our evolution toward a wiser and more responsible, empathic and compassionate life form

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