

Editorial: Personal priorities for organics to realise its potential

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Organics extends the boundaries of food and nourishment, beyond the naïve limits of production and profit – into the less quantifiable and broader areas of quality, values, responsibility, and caring for the wellbeing of all, future generations, the planet and all of life. Thus, to shift from conventional to genuine organic production requires much more than just learning about alternative techniques – it requires the ongoing development of our human potential, and this requires identifying and acknowledging and healing from our psychological wounding, and transforming the maladaptations that have enabled us to survive in a world that values power and control over love and enabling individuals to realise their potential. If organics is to have a future, I believe that it will require those involved to embrace rather than deny and postpone addressing this understanding.

In fact, I think that organics, like all other ‘good’ alternatives, is being held up and limited in its development by the denial and discomfort associated with discussing and addressing the urgent need for this essential personal and socio-cultural healing and transformation.

A good starting point is to set aside some time to gain a better understanding of relationships and relating: within oneself, with others, with the non-human world, and about the complexities of relationships within that world.

As a researcher, I spent much of my life trying to understand relationships within the soil, and between arthropod pests and their natural controls and other things that can limit them – both areas of enormous complexity, and about which we still have only a very rudimentary knowledge.

Yet, from working with farmers, I found that some were much more successful than others, for example in relating to soils and pests, yet all seemed to have access to roughly the same information. I came to distinguish between what I recognised as information-based ‘cleverness’ (which could be measured) from experience and intuition-based ‘wisdom’ (which can’t be measured).

So I started to wonder how to enable the development of this kind of wisdom. I noticed that the ‘wise farmers’ tended to be calmer, more attentive to and interested in whatever was going on around them, especially in nature. They had favourite places in nature, and times of day and times of year. Such discernment requires one to be more at peace within oneself, more fully present in the moment, and open to deep reflection and creative possibilities.

I first observed this in a very preliminary way while being taught gardening by my grandfather, who lived with us in England. He had had a very limited education, but he was impressively wise. I experienced him choosing when, where and how to plant the various crops we grew (which always grew well), with both great ‘knowing’, yet being unable to explain why! A favourite moment was from when I was only three, and he had exclaimed that “today’s the day I’m going to plant the taters (potatoes)” – I, like any small child had asked “why gramps” – he took my hand and we walked out into the garden, and he looked up into the sky and exclaimed “woor”, and then gazed at the soil, and uttered “arr” – and this was his total answer to me! Subsequently I have come to regard this wisdom element (common, from my experience, in all great organic farmers) as the essential ‘woor and arr factor’.

Subsequently, when I also trained as a psychotherapist, I recognised these same qualities in individuals who had successfully recovered from past hurts and become more internally integrated as whole beings. And my experience was that everyone can achieve this, but sadly relatively few in the population take the time to do this, and usually only because of experiencing a trauma or other personal difficulty, or because someone else suggests that they do this. I actually first investigated this area only because a colleague, who became depressed when her mother died, went into therapy. Being curious, I decided to go for a single session. I was blown away by my introduction to a whole other world that I was pretty much unaware of – essentially it was the hidden ‘me’ that I was largely unaware of! I can’t say that getting to know the deeper ‘me’ was easy (and my investigations

continue!), but it has been amazingly enriching and has given enormous meaning to my life; and enabled me to be much more helpful to others.

I won't go on about this as I have written about it elsewhere; so I have selected a few of my writings in the bibliography below; and I have listed a few of my favourite psychology references for those who are ready to embark on this journey of investigation into the depths of one's being, which can be more exciting than reading the best detective novels – and the 'endings' (or pauses along the road) are always more personally meaningful! Happy travels.

Selected bibliography of my 'Personal Development and Agriculture' writings

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Selected bibliography of my favourite psychology texts (they are mostly old because I am old!)

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