

The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Developing Integral Agriculture

Organic Conference Keynote Presentation, March 4, 2006, by John Biernbaum

As part of the speaker introduction the opening paragraph from The Voices Project presentation of “What will be in the fields tomorrow?” was read. (The performance was done the evening prior to the keynote.)

“Things come and go, and things live and things die. This natural world is going to endure long after I’m gone, and it was happening long before I got here. So I am a part of it while I’m here and I appreciate it as much as I can. I am not in control here and I can’t be in control, and if I let go, the divine can come and speak through me, give me guidance. You’ve really gotta be quiet and see what the truth is. You’ve really got to listen.”

Introduction

Story Tellers

My first organic conference in 1999, I had the privilege of hearing keynotes by John Ikerd, Michael Ableman, Elizabeth Henderson and Cynthia Vagnetti. I have also has the opportunity to hear Eliot Coleman give multiple keynotes and gotten to know him. Over the years there clearly was the sense that some day I would have the opportunity to honor the organic tradition by becoming one of the story tellers.

Map Makers and Visionaries

While the tradition of storytelling is knowing the history, we also need to know something about where we are going. For that we turn to the map makers and visionaries. I also am going to try my hand at looking forward and sharing a vision. Some of you have heard me share a vision at the end of my talks about compost or transplants or the winter greenhouse. That vision is simple – friends and families using facts and feelings to physically, faithfully and fearlessly farm front yards, fields and forests for food, feed, fiber, fuel, flowers, fertility, fun, freedom and the future. Today I get a chance to share that vision in greater detail.

Preparation – Reading (organic)

In preparation, I have visited farms, listened to farmers, and read extensively. I have read Wendell Berry, Thomas Berry, J.I. Rodale, Rachael Carson, Rudolf Steiner, Masanobu Fukuoka, F.H. King, Eliot Coleman, and many others that have shaped the organic movement. I have practiced the ideas by growing organically at home and by helping the students start the Student Organic Farm. I seek to speak both from a voice of knowledge and a voice of experience.

Nothing Has to be Said

The story I would tell has changed every year. To actually get here, I found I had to be comfortable that there was nothing I absolutely had to say. When we look around at all of the very important issues we as individuals and as a society face, it is indeed a challenge to focus on a few key issues as being more important than others.

Going Outside to Find Answers

The heart of what I want to say today comes mostly from outside of my 30 plus years of academic life and my organic training of the last seven years. The story is based on a lifetime, soon to be 49 years

of lifetime, of learning. While I read many books about personal growth and change, there is one author who pulled together many ideas that helped me find the voice for many of the ideas I will share today. *Ken Wilbur took advantage of the information age that allowed him to consider the very wide range of world cultures and wisdom traditions and search out the common knowledge.*

Being a Marriage Counselor

A big part of this story has to do with preparing to be a marriage counselor of sorts between science and organic- between industrial and organic – or between sense and soul. I think it is fair to say that after a long and at times difficult courtship, we can actually announce the engagement of science and organic farming. Indeed it is a relationship both seem wary of. The engagement is shaping up to also be long and intense. The years ahead could be hot and steamy. Having spent two years of almost weekly marriage counseling and psychotherapy – or was it one year that seemed like two? – it is well worth the effort.

A Request

I want to ask for a favor from each of you. When you hear a new idea, how do you react? Do you think: “Prove it to me”? Or can you say “that is interesting, let me try it out for a while”? While the academic environment seems to me to foster the first or prove it approach, I have found the second approach to be much more productive and fun. I am therefore requesting that if you are not used to the “let me try out that idea” approach, that you try it today. Try this out: “Biernbaum, I may not agree, but I will pretend that I do cause your such a nice guy.”

Finally, The Assignment

1) When we leave here today, I want everyone to be able to give me four clear, concise answers to the question I am about to pose. 2) I also want everyone to be able to give me four clear, concise steps to how we address the serious concerns facing our environment, our food and our selves. It has been proposed that in order to grow organic agriculture, as individuals and as communities, we need to develop “ecological and social consciousness”. Our assignment for today is to consider how we develop ecological and social consciousness?

Part 1. What is Organic Agriculture?

Do you have the blank piece of paper you were given when you entered? More paper is available if you need one. When we are done we are going to collect them up so don't use this page for notes that you want to keep for yourself. Please do use it for notes or comments for me.

I want you to characterize your self in regards to your experience with organic. If you are new to organic in the last year or two, and or this is your first or second organic conference, put a 1 in the upper right corner. If you have been learning about organic for 2 to 5 years, put a 2 in the upper right hand corner. If you would say you have 5 to 10 years experience put a 3, and greater than 10 years put a 4.

I am going to give you a question. When I do, start writing down the first key words, phrases or thoughts that come to mind. It will be helpful if we can see the order of how the ideas came out. We will take about one minute to just get the first ideas.

The question is “What is organic agriculture?” In a broad sense, what does it mean to you when I say that the food you are eating for lunch was grown or raised organically? This is your definition, so it

may be narrow or it may be broad. I am not asking just for the NOP definition but that is clearly one possible answer.

Let's take a few minutes and get some of your ideas out.
Start with the number 1's, then 2's, then 3's, and 4's.

Some expected comments:

Without fertilizers or pesticides.

Emphasis on the soil and organisms, cover crops, etc.

Emphasis on diversity of crops and ecological diversity.

Emphasis on healthy, local, fresh, etc.

Emphasis on respect.

Would you agree that there is a fairly diverse range of perspectives about organic agriculture?

Moving beyond what it is not to what it is

What it is not, is an easy place to start, but often not an accurate place to start. We do use chemicals and pesticides, but a limited number and only certain types – low solubility, generally not synthetic or highly processed.

While we want it to be, we should note that Organic is not by current definition fresher, local, or more nutritious. It can be those things, but not necessarily or just due to the production system as much as how the produce is handled, refrigerated, marketed and consumed soon after harvesting.

Health

Organic is clearly about health. Healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy animals and healthy people.

Health in a broad sense is something we can all work to better understand. MSU has announced a new initiative – “boldness by design”, and “Moving from a Land Grant to a World Grant University”. I am confused how we can be responsible for or serve the people of the state with a population considered to be the least healthy people in the nation, with some of the highest health care costs – and think we are ready to be a World Grant University. We clearly have much to offer, but something is missing.

Interconnectedness and Ecology

Some part of organic is an emphasis on the interconnectedness of all things and ecology. From the microscopic bacteria, to earthworms to animals are given respect and recognized for the roles contributed. We speak of the soil food web and the web of life.

Our understanding of evolution would indicate the development from simpler to complex forms:

atom to molecule to cell to organ to organism to colony to culture,

Clearly this development occurred in stages

Which of these is more important?

Holons and Holarchy

An important principle that emerged in my study was the concept of *holarchy*. Rather than a hierarchy, where one is more or less important, with a holarchy we recognize and honor development, without assigning more or less importance. Atoms are important because they are a building block – they are important in the role of breadth. An organism is important for its complexity or its depth. With each level of complexity there are fewer units, but greater depth. We are not looking at an hierarchy or ranking of value, but a holarchy that describes relationships related to breadth and depth. We value

each unit as a “*holon*” – something that is both a complete and whole unit, and a part and valued as both a part and a whole. As far as we know today, it is holons all the way up and all the way down. We have no evidence that there is an end in either direction.

Is Organic Agriculture Regressive?

Is organic progressive or regressive? Often there is a concern that organic is regressive, meaning going back to some earlier time. There are components of organic that were good before and are still good now. But we are not going back. It is clear why some people are concerned about going back. Back could mean oppressive or abusive in regards to types and amount of human effort required.

How did we develop as cultures? Again if we study, we see progressive development. One form of development is how we as human beings provided our food needs.

Hunting/Foraging, herding, horticultural, agrarian, and industrial

Again, we developed or changed in stages. We are not going back, what is next?

Organic should say that all these methods are ok and can be included. What organic does not or should not say is that I don't believe in industrial agriculture, or industrial agriculture is inherently bad, therefore we will go back to what we did before. Each level has potential benefits and detriments. Industrial, in the sense of mechanical help can be beneficial. In the sense of monoculture or concentrated in the hands of a few, it can be detrimental. So likely there is some common ground between organic and industrial, but we don't see very much of it yet. Large scale? If it does not displace people? Yes? Assembly line, monoculture? No?

Industrial thinking would lead some to propose that genetic engineering is sustainable, makes food healthier, and helps reduce chemical use. So why is genetic engineering not allowed in organic? Clearly a fundamental question underlying much of my study and learning the last few years. Not a question to answer today, but clearly a question that needs to be addressed. In a sense we are laying some of the foundation of that discussion here today.

Some would say that confined animal feeding operations are better than animals having to be outside in the mud and dirt exposed to who knows what. Anyone dealing with large animals outside even in a paddock during the January thaw knows how hard that can be on the animals and the soil. But we can do better than CAFO's.

Pathology and Incomplete thinking

I want to introduce two key principles that I have accepted for testing or “trying out”. First principle: any development taken too far has the potential to become detrimental or pathological. Second principle: any idea has some good – there are few totally bad ideas – or everyone is correct - but many ideas or much thinking is often incomplete. Conclusions based on these assumptions include 1) we need balance and restraint in our growth and 2) we need more complete thinking.

Complete thinking does not include justifying genetic engineering and confined animal feeding operations based on the need to keep food cheap or the need to make more food because the population is growing. More food means there will be more people. More people does not inherently imply that we make more food. ***It is not the responsibility of agriculture to keep pace with population growth. It never has been and never will be. It is the responsibility of human culture to keep population growth in pace with agriculture, the availability of food, and the capacity of our environment.*** Coming to grip with this truth is one of the important next steps of healing agriculture.

Evolution is more than DNA – Development and Differentiation Happen

I hope we can agree on the principle that understanding organic is developmental. There are levels of understanding that come with experience. I started looking at organic production methods for the edible flowers because it would differentiate and make more money. What I experienced at my first organic conference was something much larger and what I learned by visiting organic farmers was larger still and by going through certification of two different farms for several years was even larger. Learning about organic took time and was developmental.

Last night we heard some perspective regarding “What will be in the fields”. The dichotomy between organic and non-organic is either very large, or very small depending on your perspective. Clearly we have a case of a minority challenging a majority. But we know that this is how change and growth always happens. Another outcome of my study: Duality allows us to differentiate. Differentiation is good as long as it does not progress to dissociation. The end goal, however, is to differentiate and then integrate.

Is There More to Organic Agriculture?

Have our descriptions of organic gone far enough? How many of you feel there is more to “organic” than we have here or than can be put into words? Maybe the question is not “What is Organic Agriculture?”, but what do you want from agriculture and the food system?

Let’s look at a description developed over a two year period of participatory meetings and dialogs organized by IFOAM (international federation of organic agriculture movements) – pass out handouts. This description was announced last September (2005). It rings true with the idea of four, easy to remember principles that everyone can take with them and practice.

IFOAM Principles of Organic Agriculture – two page handout distributed.

Principle of Health

Principle of Ecology

Principle of Fairness

Principle of Care

These first two are consistent with our description, but what about these second two. Fairness and Care are not the domain of agriculture or science, those are ethical and moral ideas that we can’t measure. Maybe we better leave those alone. I mean whose ethics and morals? Everyone has different ideas and there is no way to agree after all.

How many of you agree with that perspective? How many want to talk about fairness and care?

Part 2. Fairness and Care

We agreed that our definition of organic evolves with time and experience. Well our understanding of who we are as human beings also grows with time, age, and maturity or it should.

Parts of these principles have to do with wholeness and interconnections. One of the things that has changed the past century is that we have grown from a mechanistic or clock work view of the world to a more holistic or relativity view. In organic we say that the web of life and interconnection are important. In scientific term we talk about a systems or ecological approach.

If you want to understand the principles of fairness and care, it is not enough to move from a mechanistic to a system's approach. As we will see, this is rational or empirical or give me something I can measure thinking, which shrinks the world into a world of “its” that than can be observed, measured and controlled. There needs to be something more. There are lots of numbers and data to indicate we need a change in direction. Yet change is occurring slowly if at all. Will more numbers or data help? I have clearly chosen to not offer more evidence or empirical or physical examples of what is “wrong” or alternative methods. We need to expand our story and our vision.

Human Development

Let's go back again and consider development. How many of you have heard the name Piaget? Do you associate it with stages or levels of development in children? What are some of those stages of development? Awareness of surrounding, differentiation of self from surrounding, awareness of others (different than surroundings), development of understanding of self in relation to others. We also speak of the development and differentiation of ego (self) and then the understanding of others and our relationship to others, and the ability to put ourselves in the place of others – to see the perspective of the other. All of these can be considered developmental stages. My perception is that we were taught that this only has to do with children, and not with adults. As adults we continue to develop these stages and our ability to use them in our daily lives.

Researchers have identified stages or levels in adult individuals that are parallel to our development as a culture over thousands of years. Cultures or humans have developed over time by primarily relying on different ways of being in the world. Some stages that have been characterized include:

Instinctual	magic	myth/conformist	rational
	(I am in control)	(The gods or God is in control)	(Stuff happens)
Egocentric		Ethnocentric	
Preconventional		conventional	
Premodern		modern	
Matter	Body		Mind

(Stop at rational – for now – explain that we are not done and come back.)

An important principle that I learned is that every human being starts at the beginning and moves through these developmental stages. ***There will always be a mix of people operating more or less from each perspective. We will never all have the same perspective and should stop considering that it is possible. The key is not to change someones perspective or make them like me, the key is to help them celebrate where they are so they are not afraid to grow. By modeling were we are at the time and being the best we can be – everyone has someone to look to as a model of how they might be different, and everyone is a model for someone else. I don't need you to be like me, just let me celebrate you as you are. Another important principle based on the evidence presented, is that a person operating out of a particular perspective tends to be wary or fearful of the other perspectives.***

One of our developmental goals is to overcome this fear.

The Perennial Philosophy and the Great Chain of Being

The wisdom traditions of old were and still are aware of these developments, and much more. The “perennial philosophy” or the “great chain of being” has been used for millennia to teach about the progression of human development from matter to body to mind.

But the chain keeps going. Please don’t call out the answer, but who knows what comes next in the chain? (If few hands raised, might comment that “here in lies the rub”.)

You see despite the misunderstanding of many academics, development does not go from matter to body to mind and stop. Development progresses on to matter, body, mind, to soul. To understand the importance of the principle of fairness and care, it is helpful to have a grasp of the concepts of soul and spirit.

The Big Three

About 500 years ago, in the process of differentiation of science from the human ego and religion, science rightly carved out its own space. Unfortunately it kept on carving and carved up Art and Morals. Art on the one side, morals on the other side got covered up by science flexing its new found muscles and tools. The result, the industrial revolution – which on the positive side – helped put an end to slavery – but on the negative side – at a great price to our environment.

As much as I loved the science of my youth and developing my mind, I knew something was missing. I found what was missing and have embraced a more complete perspective that includes a love of the self and art – the physical world around us – and the love of the soul – the invisible world that surrounds us and the interior world that feeds us. And that my friends has lead to more complete thinking and being and a more ecological consciousness.

If we look again at matter, body, mind, soul, we can see the three “perspectives” :

<i>Body</i>	<i>Mind</i>	<i>Soul</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>It</i>	<i>We</i>
<i>Art</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Morals</i>
<i>The beautiful</i>	<i>The true</i>	<i>The good</i>

Here is the marriage of sense and soul.

Why does Wendell Berry use poetry in his writing about food? What does poetry have to do with it? Why did we host a theatrical performance about what will be in the fields last night? Why did the Kellogg Foundation fund the project to develop the theatrical performance?

For thousands of years, there was respect for body, mind, soul – the physical truth, the moral goodness, and the beauty of oneness. Not in the same way we can know them now. Over the last few hundred years, we temporarily lost the great chain of being or the perennial philosophy. We have paid a steep price. Our environment and nature have paid a steep price. Now is the time to bring the great chain of being, the perennial philosophy back into balance. How do we do this?

Moving Beyond Rational to a Balanced Approach

We have to recognize that there are other ways of knowing besides the empirical science of it and its – that which we can see. We have to be comfortable with the idea that we are not going back to simpler times, we are moving forward, with more complete thinking and being.

The answers we seek are not in a regressive New Age magic or animism or mysticism. The answers are in a balanced, integrated approach, that respects the value of science and truth, together with the importance of beauty/art/ individual, and morals of the community. Rational empiricism needs to be reigned in and take its place at a table of others. Science belongs at all levels or stages of development, but with the recognition that it must deal with more than just the exterior. We need to continue to use rationality to hold us to truths, but science needs to understand that just because the human mind is capable of thinking of an idea, we are not obligated to follow through and test or implement the idea.

Empirical Science or the science of observation has two different meanings in common use. One is a narrow sense, empirical science is only what I can see and measure. The other is the broader sense of applying science to the eye of the flesh, the eye of reason, and the eye of spirit or contemplation. For centuries, some scientists have denied what they cannot see. If I can't measure it, it does not exist. Unfortunately we have forgotten that we use constructs all the time that cannot be seen or measured. Mathematics, algebra, the square root of a negative number are all mental constructs that cannot be seen, but they can be tested, and a community can agree or confirm what one "sees" in the mind. Today, many scientists have rejected the myth of only dealing with the visible and measurable and we will all benefit.

This is the difference between the "exteriors" and the "interiors" that compromise our world. You cannot have exteriors without interiors. To develop ecological consciousness, we need to develop our interiors.

This myth of claiming that science only deals with the visible and measurable has allowed some scientists to deny things like ethics, social principles, and the existence of "God" or "Spirit" or some construct of connectedness.

Our continuing evolution of the mind is dependent on us learning that the mind is capable of great deception and there are things we can think of that we should not do. The mind can be tested and balanced with Art and Morals. Beauty is important, morals are important, and these things are used to harness and restrain what the ego can do alone. Science is not just a system of investigation. By definition, science requires a great body of knowledge, something that is often lacking in those who hide behind a shield of science. Children are not inherently scientists, they are inherently investigators. Good science requires more than being an investigator.

Part 3. The Developmental of the Interior and the Developmental Disciplines

How do we help people develop ecological consciousness? How do we help people develop a sense of fairness and care? We recognize that we develop as individuals in the same way we have as a culture.

Remember the levels or stages of development? Well there are more stages after rational. As we move beyond rational, the evidence presented by Ken Wilber indicates that we actually begin to develop into stages that are no longer afraid of the stage or level on either side. This next stage is referred to as pluralistic (boomeritis of the 1960's) and develops into integral. ***Our goal is to help individuals develop though these stages to more integral, less fearful stages. There is evidence that as we move to a certain stage, fear is reduced, inclusive is increased.***

Instinctual	magic myth/conformist	rational	pluralistic	integral
Egocentric Preconventional Premodern		Ethnocentric conventional modern		World to Kosmos-centric postconventional postmodern
Matter	Body	Mind	Soul	Spirit

As we move beyond fear, it is possible to experience first hand on a regular basis the oneness of the Universe. It is possible to experience the oneness of the Universe at any perspective. How you describe that experience depends on your perspective. Where you one with nature, saved by Jesus, or did you realize you are one with the Universal oneness? But to live the oneness of the Universe on a daily basis requires development of the soul and spirit.

How do we get more people to develop into these stages? One key step is to recognize that we already have everything we need. We always have and always will have total access to the oneness of the Universe. For thousands of years, the description of how to grow and develop has been right inside of us. If we look at the major wisdom traditions – often refereed to as religions, the teachers and founders where not about the miracles, the virgin births, etc. The teachers were about helping people develop through what has been called over time the contemplative, or spiritual or the developmental disciplines.

Rudolf Steiner, the initiator of the Biodynamic Agriculture movement, wrote extensively about connecting with spirit. One of the key injunctions or instructions he gave was to concentrate on doing acts of kindness and being of service to others. Many of his ideas are a result of his connection with spirit.

In my studies, I have learned about the spiritual or developmental disciplines which I will present as balancing pairs.

The developmental/spiritual disciplines or contemplative traditions:

Ritual (habit and repetitiveness) and **Randomness** (newness, experimenting)

Solitude (quiet, alone time) and **Celebration** (active, community time)

Sabbath (rest and quite, personal/family) and **Service** (active, giving to others)

Simplicity (what do I really need) and **Indulgence** (ok to reward myself & others)

Repentance (I am sorry) and **Forgiveness** (I accept your apology)

Fasting (doing without) and **Study** (Gather in, knowledge or other things)

Submission (listening to others) and **Guidance** (helping others)

Meditation (listening quietly to the internal) and **Prayer** (voicing dreams, wishes, beliefs)

One of the most important of these is Meditation. Meditation can take many forms, from sitting to walking. Could be hand labor on the farm, like weeding carrots or onions, would be a great form of meditation and opportunity to listen to the spirit.

Unfortunately, we have to deal with myth and misconception again. If you look up meditation in the dictionary, you likely will see “concentrated or focused thought”. This is not it at all. Meditation is closer to the opposite. Meditation is about relaxing the mind and opening the heart. In our world today it is very difficult to quite the mind. We are coming off several hundred years of being told it is all about the mind and the mind is the purpose of evolution. Developing the mind, in conjunction with the physical body, the emotions and spirit, all in a balanced way, is what all the wisdom traditions would point to.

Another possible misleading perception about meditation that is that only monks in isolation do it or that you have to lead a special life to do it or to be spiritual. The true gift of meditation and connecting to spirit is that it does not take a lot of time, and it can help with the everyday down in the dirt issues. Few people get to go be in a monastery or up on the mountain top. ***The spiritual disciplines are about ascending and descending on a daily basis, connecting with the Universal Self and doing dishes and laundry in the same day.*** The chakras of the eastern traditions are about first developing and then visiting all the levels.

Let us take a few minutes together and experience an example of meditation and how it feels to relieve the fear and experience oneness.

Searching for Sustainability: Relaxing the Mind, Connecting to the Sacred

Relax and become aware of your breath. Slowly in, slowly out, deliberately in, deliberately out. Let the rhythm of the breath sing to your mind and calm it like a lullaby settles a baby. With each breath, feel the sacred in the simple. Feel what we share in common. Listen. Not with your ears. Not *to* your breath. Listen *with* your breath. Feel the breath. Feel where the air touches your lungs, within your chest. You can not see, just imagine. Try feeling it like you hear sounds. Sound waves vibrate the inner ear which sends a signal that impacts your entire body. Imagine air touching the inside of your lungs and doing the same thing. Try breathing in the vibration of my voice and feel it in your lungs. Breathe in the aroma in the room through your mouth and sense it in your lungs.

The air we breathe. Our mind may see it as nothingness. But is it? Is it emptiness? Or is it greatness? The air we breathe sustains us. The air we breathe is truly directly connected to all things. It has clearly existed in some form, or many forms since the beginning of time. The sacred universal oneness that we sense, but may not know. Through time visualized and experienced as “that which connects all things”. The air we breathe is directly connected to the tallest mountains, the deepest oceans, the wildest jungles, the vast plains, the largest trees, the driest deserts. The air we breathe is directly connected to the planets around us, the sun that feeds us and powers our world, and the edges of the universe that the mind can only imagine as infinite.

The mind has limits. It is a powerful tool that we have exercised and developed to help us. If allowed to become master rather than servant, it becomes a spoiled, self-centered adolescent. The answers we seek are only possible through the constructs the mind calls heart and soul. The memory of the universe resides in the maturity and balance of the chest. That point where we intimately experience that which connects all things. Feel the air contact your lungs. Listen again, not with your mind, with the breath. If we rely only on the mind, we continue on a path that cannot take us where we want to go. With each breath, remember where we came from, who we are, and where we are called to go. Let the experience of that which connects all things calm your mind and guide your words. Know that the answers we seek are all around us and shared. We only need to listen, as we breathe.

John Biernbaum
The Voice Within
April 17, 2004

Please relax in this place, keep your eyes closed if you like, and as you come back to the surface, listen to some parting thoughts.

Know that there are other ways of knowing. In addition to the eye of flesh, we use the eye of mind all the time to figure things out and describe them without seeing them anywhere in nature. Where do you see the square root of a negative number? We explore, we test, and if enough people have the same answer or experience, we agree and a theorem or proof is born.

This is the same approach that can be applied to spirituality or the connectedness of things. We start with instructions or an “injunction” – a directive to do something specific – in this case the developmental disciplines including meditation of multiple forms. We then pay attention to what happens and “apprehend” the result. Finally we compare the results. It is possible to do this with meditation and with finding spirit. It does not require any dogma or believes in virgin birth or bodily ascension or miracles.

The distance we have to go is not far. It is moving from the mind to the heart. We need to let the heart sense and the mind interpret, not the other way around?

The most difficult 14” journey, from the head to the heart, as described by Winona Laduke in another organic conference key note and her writing. The heart and lungs are the contact with the spirit. Let the heart lung complex guide the brain.

What do you get out of meditation?

Have you every contemplated why it is that we tend to see things as black or white? Why do we seem to deal so often with the duality of love or hate, good or evil, right or wrong? What the contemplative or wisdom traditions seek to develop in each of us is the understanding that duality is a mental construct of the mind. When one moves to the center, or out of the head, into a more balanced position, it is possible to experience what the Budhists call “one taste” – the realization and experience of everything being one. Have you ever had the experience of being one with nature? Or maybe you have talked with someone who has. The intense joy and passion of being totally at peace with everything as it is. Not needing to change it or fix it or engineer it. That feeling can be cultivated. It can not only happen as a peak or brief, highly intense experience, but it can happen as a constant state of being.

To further our development and protect our environment and live the principle of care and fairness, we each need to practice. We need to practice good eating, good sleeping, good exercise and regular meditation and or contemplative practices. The change will develop one person at a time.

This is part of ecological consciousness. You don't need to study ecology to get it. You need to open your heart to the joy of oneness and one taste, the non-dual reality. Be still, be quite, do random acts of kindness, be fair, take care of the people around you. All of this is possible and can be cultivated. It is part of the marriage of sense and soul. It is how we cultivate personal health and community vitality. It is not complicated. If anything it is the paradox of how can something so simple be the answer.

What would life be like if every where you looked, every moment, you saw beauty and felt that feeling of seeing perfection and harmony?

Part of getting there is seeking balance. Physical Health, Mental Health, Emotional Health and Spiritual Health. Good, complete ideas are ageless. We need complete being.

It is called discipline for a reason. Development takes time and effort.

The oak tree is in the acorn, but the acorn is not the oak tree. To form the tree requires differentiation, development and integration.

Our future is in integral agriculture, which for the present is Organic Agriculture.

Thank you.

(Abstract on next page)

The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Developing Integral Agriculture

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We seek to develop sustainable agricultural methods that protect our environment, provide farmers with quality of life and provide a socially just and secure food system. Organic agriculture is built on the four principles of health, ecology, fairness and care. We have been told that to encourage sustainable and organic agriculture, we need to develop ecological and social consciousness. What do history, experience, and the wisdom traditions say about how to develop personal and community health along with ecological and social consciousness? The perennial philosophy or “great chain of being” is built on the recognition of the temporal development of cultures and individuals through operational stages of matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. These developmental stages or perspectives have also been characterized as instinctual, magical, mythical/conformist, rational, pluralistic and integral. We also speak of developing our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual sense of well being. Traditionally each of these perspectives have included the dimensions of “the beautiful” – Art or the “I”, “the true” – Science or the “It”, and “the good” – Morals or the “We”. To act in a balanced and complete manner, we must develop the corresponding “eye of the flesh” (Art), the “eye of the mind” (Science) and the “eye of spirit” (Morals). Our current academic system is overly dominated by the eye of mind, the ‘It’ and science. Our political system is perhaps dominated by the eye of flesh and the I? Developing the spiritual sense of well being necessary to develop ecological and social consciousness and an integral agriculture is accomplished by contemplation, practicing the developmental disciplines, and developing the eye of spirit. What we most lack is the quiet mental time of meditation. Not meditation as defined in the dictionary – “focused thought”. Meditation as a relaxing of the mind and thought and an opening and cultivation of the “heart”. In addition to meditation, the heart can be opened to connect to the oneness of spirit through simple activities like walking, gardening, interacting with animals and farming in a healthy way, helping others, and enjoying the beauty of the natural world. Meditation may seem like too easy of an answer to such an apparently complex problem. The challenge is in the discipline of practice.

The developmental/spiritual disciplines or contemplative traditions:

Ritual (habit and repetitiveness) and **Randomness** (newness, experimenting)

Solitude (quiet, alone time) and **Celebration** (active, community time)

Sabbath (rest and quiet, personal/family) and **Service** (active, giving to others)

Simplicity (what do I really need) and **Indulgence** (ok to reward myself & others)

Repentance (I am sorry) and **Forgiveness** (I accept your apology)

Fasting (doing without) and **Study** (Gather in, knowledge or other things)

Submission (listening to others) and **Guidance** (helping others)

Meditation (listening quietly to the internal) and **Prayer** (voicing dreams, wishes, beliefs)

To learn more, investigate the writing of Kenneth Wilber.

The Principles of Organic Agriculture (From www.IFOAM.org)

Preamble

These Principles are the roots from which organic agriculture grows and develops. They express the contribution that organic agriculture can make to the world, and a vision to improve all agriculture in a global context.

Agriculture is one of humankind's most basic activities because all people need to nourish themselves daily. History, culture and community values are embedded in agriculture. The Principles apply to agriculture in the broadest sense, including the way people tend soils, water, plants and animals in order to produce, prepare and distribute food and other goods. They concern the way people interact with living landscapes, relate to one another and shape the legacy of future generations.

The Principles of Organic Agriculture serve to inspire the organic movement in its full diversity. They guide IFOAM's development of positions, programs and standards. Furthermore, they are presented with a vision of their world-wide adoption.

Organic agriculture is based on:

- The principle of *health***
- The principle of *ecology***
- The principle of *fairness***
- The principle of *care***

Each principle is articulated through a statement followed by an explanation. The principles are to be used as a whole. They are composed as ethical principles to inspire action.

Principle of Health

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

This principle points out that the health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems - healthy soils produce healthy crops that foster the health of animals and people. Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems. It is not simply the absence of illness, but the maintenance of physical, mental, social and ecological well-being. Immunity, resilience and regeneration are key characteristics of health.

The role of organic agriculture, whether in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption, is to sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms from the smallest in the soil to human beings. In particular, organic agriculture is intended to produce high quality, nutritious food that contributes to preventive health care and well-being. In view of this it should avoid the use of fertilizers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects.

Principle of Ecology

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

This principle roots organic agriculture within living ecological systems. It states that production is to be based on ecological processes, and recycling. Nourishment and well-being are achieved through the ecology of the specific production environment. For example, in the case of crops this is the living soil; for animals it is the farm ecosystem; for fish and marine organisms, the aquatic environment.

Organic farming, pastoral and wild harvest systems should fit the cycles and ecological balances in nature. These cycles are universal but their operation is site-specific. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. Inputs should be reduced by reuse, recycling and efficient management of materials and energy in order to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources.

Organic agriculture should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity. Those who produce, process, trade, or consume organic products should protect and benefit the common environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water.

Principle of Fairness

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings.

This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties - farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers. Organic agriculture should provide everyone involved with a good quality of life, and contribute to food sovereignty and reduction of poverty. It aims to produce a sufficient supply of good quality food and other products.

This principle insists that animals should be provided with the conditions and opportunities of life that accord with their physiology, natural behavior and well-being.

Natural and environmental resources that are used for production and consumption should be managed in a way that is socially and ecologically just and should be held in trust for future generations. Fairness requires systems of production, distribution and trade that are open and equitable and account for real environmental and social costs.

Principle of Care

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

Organic agriculture is a living and dynamic system that responds to internal and external demands and conditions. Practitioners of organic agriculture can enhance efficiency and increase productivity, but this should not be at the risk of jeopardizing health and well-being. Consequently, new technologies need to be assessed and existing methods reviewed. Given the incomplete understanding of ecosystems and agriculture, care must be taken.

This principle states that precaution and responsibility are the key concerns in management, development and technology choices in organic agriculture. Science is necessary to ensure that organic agriculture is healthy, safe and ecologically sound. However, scientific knowledge alone is not sufficient. Practical experience, accumulated wisdom and traditional and indigenous knowledge offer valid solutions, tested by time. Organic agriculture should prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as genetic engineering. Decisions should reflect the values and needs of all who might be affected, through transparent and participatory processes.