



The Difference Between Natural and Unnatural, by Masanobu Fukuoka

For thirty years I lived only in my farming and had little contact with people outside my own community. During those years I was heading in a straight line toward a "do nothing" agricultural method.

The usual way to go about developing a method is to ask, "How about trying this?" or "How about trying that?" bringing in a variety of techniques one upon the other. This is modern agriculture and it only results in making the farmer busier.

My way was opposite. I was aiming at a pleasant, natural way of farming which results in making the work easier instead of harder. "How about not doing this? How about not doing that?" -- that was my way of thinking. I ultimately reached the conclusion that there was no need to plow, no need to apply fertilizer, no need to make compost, no need to use insecticide. When you get right down to it, there are few agricultural practices that are really necessary.

The reason that man's improved techniques seem to be necessary is that the natural balance has been so badly upset beforehand by those same techniques, that the land has become dependent on them.

This line of reasoning not only applies to agriculture, but to other aspects of human society as well. Doctors and medicine become necessary when people create a sickly environment. Formal schooling has no intrinsic value, but becomes necessary when humanity creates a condition in which one must become "educated" to get along.

Before the end of the war, when I went up to the citrus orchard to practice what I then thought was natural farming, I did no pruning and left the orchard to itself. The branches became tangled, the trees were attacked by insects and almost two acres of mandarin orange trees withered and died. From that time on, the question, "What is the natural pattern?" was always in my mind. In the process of arriving at the answer, I wiped out another 400 acres. Finally I felt I could say with certainty: "This is the natural pattern."

To the extent that trees deviate from their natural form, pruning and insect extermination become necessary; to the extent that human society separates itself from a life close to nature, schooling becomes necessary. In nature, formal schooling has no function. []

Almost everyone thinks that "nature" is a good thing, but few can grasp the difference between natural and unnatural.

If a single new bud is snipped off a fruit tree with a pair of scissors, that may bring about disorder which cannot be undone. When growing according to natural form, branches spread alternately from the trunk and the leaves receive sunlight uniformly. If this sequence is disrupted the branches come into conflict, lie one upon another and become tangled, and the leaves wither in the places where the sun cannot penetrate. Insect damage develops. If the tree is not pruned the following year more withered branches will appear.

Human beings with their tampering do something wrong, leave the damage unrepaired, and when the adverse results accumulate, work with all their might to correct them. When the corrective actions appear to be successful, they come to view these measures as successful accomplishments. People do this over and over again. It is as if a fool were to stomp on and break the tiles of his roof. Then when it starts to rain and the ceiling begins to rot away, he hastily climbs up to mend the damage, rejoicing in the end that he has accomplished a miraculous solution.

It is the same way with the scientist. He pores over books night and day, straining his eyes and becoming nearsighted, and if you wonder what on earth he has been working on all the time -- it is to become the inventor of eyeglasses to correct nearsightedness.

--Masanobu Fukuoka in *_One Straw Revolution_*