
Sustainable development through individualisation
Commentary on Andreas Suchantke: Einbindung oder Sonderstellung des Menschen

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Ecology has so far made heavy weather of human beings – we rank first as destroyers of the world that we share with other creatures, but our role as preservers and developers is rarely acknowledged. With this it is clear – and Andreas Suchantke explains it convincingly – that both taking control of nature for our own uses, and integrating the human being into, it belong to the evolution of human autonomy.

The author sees the first steps towards investigating the relationship between the human being and the biosphere only in research into the ozone hole and the greenhouse effect. Both problems are closely related to industrial products such as refrigerators, foam plastics and our insatiable combustion of fossil fuels.

Here I would like to draw attention to another big player in the environment issue, namely agriculture. In doing so I will not go into the environmental sins of industrial food production, but instead look at the significance of organic and biodynamic agriculture. They are strikingly close to the thinking of Eugene P. Odum, the American ecologist, whom Suchantke takes as a starting point. At the end of the 1960s, Odum investigated how ecosystems develop. After an initial or young phase with high productivity and low increase in biomass, there follows a stage of maturity that is distin-
guished by a lower productivity yet a constantly high quantity of substance. Although agricultural production systems are kept in a young phase, there are big differences between industrial and organic productions. Organic and biodynamic production show lower yields in Europe and in the USA (i.e. lower productivity), but a huge increase in biomass, though not above ground but below it. Both these cultivation methods not only maintain the humus resource but even increase it (Mäder et al. 2002; Pretty et al. 2006; Granstedt and Kjellenberg 2008, Oltmanns 2013, and many others). The quantity of CO₂ that this stores in the ground can reach 500kg/year/ha! On the one hand, this is a large contribution to the reduction of the greenhouse effect, and on the other hand it improves the soil structure thus leading to a greater uptake and holding capacity for water, which, especially in developing countries, can be reflected in yield increases of up to 80 percent. But the success of these methods of agriculture has yet another basis – and with this I connect with Suchantke’s cognitive methods: According to him, we each perceive in our own consciousness the world and evolution – and in this way they become individualised in the I of each person. The 2008 World Agriculture Report (summary Härlin and Beck 2013) clearly showed that sustainable nourishment for everyone can most readily be ensured by traditional agricultural practices and their further development. In other words, world hunger is best combated by a variety of individual farming methods. In the anniversary book Agriculture for the Future – Biodynamic agriculture today. 90 years since Koberwitz (Hurter 2014) there are examples of individualised agricultural practices. Individualisation of the world in human consciousness gives rise to individual impulses for action!

Literatur / References

