

Doctrine of Signatures

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God's Handiwork

"The Doctrine of Signatures" states that the physical form of a plant gives a clue as to its healing purposes. In the New King James version of the Holy Bible, it states, "And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.'" ~ Genesis 1:29.

Several European herbalists from the past believed that God Himself left us clues as to what plants are most beneficial to specific ailments and body parts. Although the science of nutrition was not known then, the application of this principle through careful observation was memorialized in early herbal texts and has been revived today in homeopathy, herbalism and the study of flower essences.

The "Doctrine of Signatures" was popularized in the early 1600s by the writings of Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), a master shoemaker in the small town of Görlitz, Germany. When Böhme was 25 years old, he had a profound mystical vision in which he saw the relationship between man and his Creator. As a result of this vision, he wrote the book "*Signatura Rerum*" which translates in English as "The Signature of all Things." While his book espoused a spiritual philosophy of man's connection to the natural world, the concept of God's signature on various plants was adopted for its medical applications.

Paracelsus (Philippus Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493-1541) was a Swiss physician, alchemist and philosopher who modern scholars consider to be the father of modern chemistry. He did much in his lifetime to popularize

the Doctrine of Signatures in its medical application.

However, it was an avid student of Paracelsus, William Coles (1626-1662), a 17th century botanist and author of "*The Art of Simpling*" and "*Adam in Eden*," who ultimately popularized this concept for practical medical applications. Coles found that walnuts were good for curing head ailments because "they have the perfect Signatures of the Head".

Regarding St. John's Wort (*hypericum*), he said that, "the little holes whereof the leaves of Saint Johns Wort are full, does resemble all the pores of the skin and therefore it is profitable for all hurts and wounds that can happen thereunto."

And it is Nicholas Culpeper's repeatedly reprinted "*Culpeper's Color Herbal*" (I have the 1983 edition) that takes the Doctrine of Signatures as common knowledge. The influence of this book is where the Doctrine carries over into modern herbal lore.

To fully appreciate the significance of this Doctrine of Signatures, it is important to go back to Paracelsus. Underlying Paracelsus' treatise was the premise that nature was itself a living organism, which must be considered an expression of "the One Life" and that man and the universe are the same in their essential nature. It was Paracelsus who popularized the concept that the Creator has placed his seal on plants to indicate their medicinal uses.

When looking carefully at nature, Paracelsus noticed how the qualities of plants often reflected their appearance—that the seeds of skullcap, for example, resemble small skulls. The herb has been known to be effective in the treatment of brain and nervous system disorders. He also noticed that the hollow stalk of garlic resembles the windpipe, lending to its use for throat and bronchial problems. Due to his observations, Paracelsus believed the inner nature of plants may be

discovered by their outer forms or “signatures.” He applied this principle to food as well as medicine, remarking that “it is not in the quantity of food but in its quality that resides the Spirit of Life”—a belief familiar to those who choose to eat organic food while also being justifiably concerned over Genetically Modified substitutes that lack the “life force,” or spirit.

According to Paracelsus, connecting to the essence of a plant is the gateway to its spirit or consciousness .¹

For the last several years, an email has been forwarded (to us, multiple times) that illustrates this concept with food and how God’s signature is inherent in the food we eat. Validation of this concept is now being proven scientifically through nutritional science. The content of the email speaks for itself:

Whole food signatures

A stupendous insight of civilizations past has now been confirmed by today’s investigative, nutritional sciences. They have shown that what was once called “The Doctrine of Signatures” was astoundingly correct.

Referred to in the classical period of Rome as the “Law of Similarities” it is now called by scientists, “Teleological Nutritional Targeting.”

It now contends that every whole food has a pattern that resembles a body organ or physiological function and that this pattern acts as a signal or sign as to the benefit the food provides the eater.

A sliced carrot looks like the human eye. The pupil, iris and radiating lines look just like the human eye... and YES, science now shows carrots greatly enhance blood flow to and function of the eyes.

A tomato has four chambers and is red. The heart has four chambers and is red. All of the research shows tomatoes are loaded with lycopene and are indeed pure heart and blood food.

Grapes hang in a cluster that has the shape of the heart. Each grape looks like a blood cell and all of the research today shows grapes are also profound heart and blood vitalizing food.

A walnut looks like a little brain, a left and right hemisphere, upper cerebrums and lower cerebellums. Even the wrinkles or folds on the nut are just like the neo-cortex. We now know walnuts help develop more than three dozen neurotransmitters for brain function.

Kidney beans actually heal and help maintain kidney function and yes, they look exactly like the human kidneys.

Celery, bok choy, rhubarb and many more look just like bones. These foods specifically target bone strength. Bones are 23 percent sodium and these foods are 23 percent sodium. If you don't have enough sodium in your diet, the body pulls it from the bones, thus making them weak. These foods replenish the skeletal needs of the body.

Avocados, eggplant and pears target the health and function of the womb and cervix of the female—they look just like these organs. Today's research shows that when a woman eats one avocado a week, it balances hormones, sheds unwanted birth weight, and prevents cervical cancers. And how profound is this? It takes exactly nine months to grow an avocado from blossom to ripened fruit. There are over 14,000 photolytic chemical constituents of nutrition in each one of these foods (modern science has only studied and named about 141 of them).

Figs are full of seeds and hang in twos when they grow. Figs increase the mobility of male sperm and increase the numbers of Sperm as well to overcome male sterility.

Sweet potatoes look like the pancreas and actually balance the glycemic index of diabetics.

Olives assist the health and function of the ovaries

Oranges, grapefruits, and other citrus fruits look just like the mammary glands of the female and actually assist the health of the breasts and the movement of lymph in and out of the breasts.

Onions look like the body's cells. Today's research shows onions help clear waste materials from all of the body cells. They even produce tears, which wash the epithelial layers of the eyes.

A working companion, garlic, also helps eliminate waste materials and dangerous free radicals from the body.²

My own experience with natural healing always brought me greater awareness of this principle. I remember a new friend who shared how he had recovered from cancer. He said he was drawn to beets and decided to literally eat nothing but beets for the healing of his cancer. When I met him he was "cancer-free." He ate them both steamed and juiced, having planted a garden full of them. It took him a full two months on this regimen to fully recover.

Please remember that this is not a formula for healing but a spiritual quest. All true healing involves the psyche, emotions, spirit and, lastly, the physical. The expansion of our spiritual quest will lead us to the cure, if we would simply listen.

The reason this reminded me of the Doctrine of Signatures is the fact that cancer was unknown prior to the advent of vaccinations, a form of blood poisoning. Beets, being deep red in color, have the signature of a plant that is beneficial for the blood. Blood purifying herbs such as chaparral, red clover, burdock root, taheebo and many others are also

specific for all cancers. Dr. W. B. Clarke of Indianapolis, Indiana, had this to say on the subject in the book, "*The Drug Story*" by Morris Beale (1949): "Cancer was practically unknown until cowpox vaccination began to be introduced. I have had to deal with at least 200 cases of cancer, and I NEVER SAW A CASE OF CANCER IN AN UNVACCINATED PERSON."

The "Doctrine" in other cultures

Many other indigenous cultures saw the signature on plants as a sign of its practical applications.

Howard Charing, author of *Plant Spirit Shamanism*, shares his experience in the Amazon rain forest:

"The doctrine of signatures treatise is not something known by indigenous shamans, but they understand the principles behind it well enough, that nature has spirit and communicates with us. These principles are not regarded as fanciful at all, but so important that they can save lives.

"I discovered how the doctrine of signatures operates in the Amazon, for example, during my experiences with the Jergon Sacha (*dracontium peruvianum*) plant.

"My first exposure to this plant came about quite accidentally, when one day walking through the rainforest studying the properties of the plants, the maestro Javier queried why I always walked around with a machete. I jokingly replied, "It's against anacondas!" He paused in thought for a moment and beckoned for me to follow him. A few minutes later we came across this tall-stemmed plant. He proceeded to cut it down and then whip me around the body paying attention to my legs and the soles of my feet. He then said "no more problems, you are protected against snakes." I asked him why this plant was used in this way, and he indicated the pattern on the stem, which looks identical to the snakes in the forest. Later as I started to investigate this plant even more, I discovered some interesting correspondences; this is a plant, which is

widely used as an antidote against snakebite venom in the Amazon.

“This is accordance with the ‘Doctrine of Signatures’ concept... The underlying principle was that the healing properties of the plant are not only in the outer ‘physical’ form, but also in their inner or spiritual nature. The Doctrine of Signatures holds that this inner nature can be revealed by its outer physical form or signatures. This plant is a clear demonstration of the outer form indicating the inner qualities. It’s use is directly related to it’s physical appearance, the patterns on the tall stem closely resembles the skin patterns of the highly venomous pit viper known as ‘Bushmaster’ or Jararaca which is indigenous to the Amazon.

“The large tuber of the plant is a well-known and highly-effective antidote for the bite of venomous snakes. The tuber is chopped up and immersed in cold water and then drunk. Also the chopped tuber is placed in a banana leaf and used as a poultice, which is wrapped around the bite area. These procedures are repeated every few hours. Of course the deal here is that it works and as it is not possible to store anti-venom vaccines in the rainforest without refrigeration, this plant has exceptional life-saving importance.”¹

Our recent experience harvesting horsetail or shavegrass (*equisetum arvense*) locally brought the Doctrine of Signatures home for me. The plant is the highest known source of silica with exceptional quantities of calcium, chromium, potassium, manganese, sulfur, iron and magnesium and is well known for its ability to strengthen bones, joints, hair, skin and nails and connective tissue in general. It is also known to help with disorders of the urinary tract.

The plant itself has no broad leaves, has a “jointed” stem that resembles our limbs, with thin filament-like offshoots resembling nerve fibers. It grows best in moist areas near fresh water indicating its use in cleansing the urinary tract.

After reading Maria T. Bohle's article on horsetail, "Equisetum: The Search for a Polycrest" at Homeopathy OnLine, I gained an entirely new perspective on the Doctrine of Signatures since the plants themselves are so much more than the nutritional attributes that we tend to focus on.

Each plant literally has its own personality—much like the uniqueness of each animal and human being. This is definitely an old concept that is being revived and is proving to have fascinating applications in healing from all sorts of maladies—specifically the emotional and spiritual maladies plaguing our culture. It is gratifying to see a return to the plants that God gave us for both food and healing while also seeing the Doctrine of Signatures applied in the sciences of homeopathy, shamanism and flower essences.

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<http://www.shamanicjourney.com/alchemy-shamanism-organic-food-and-the-doctrine-of-signatures>

2 <http://www.jcrows.com/signatures.html>

3 "Equisetum: The Search for a Polycrest" by Maria T. Bohle. Article is no longer available online.

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