

Playing God, Creating Hell: the Arrogant Misuse of Science

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Theme: [Science and Medicine](#)

Some mountaineers climb Everest simply because it's there. And some scientists play God simply because they can. Then other independent and less well-funded scientists have to spend years doing the research that proves playing God was the wrong thing to do, only by then it is often too late. Time and again man's actions have had disastrous and irreversible effects

His name was Ron. In the 1950s he joined the Navy. In October 1956 he found himself on a vessel sailing towards the Monte Bello Islands, off the northwest coast of Australia. There were other ships making for the same destination – or being ordered out of a ‘no-sail-zone’. They came to a halt some miles off the islands where they rested overnight. It was only then that the crew, [guinea pigs all](#), learnt they were there to witness the second British atom bomb test. In the morning they assembled on the open deck facing the islands, although they couldn't see them across the waves. A short time before the expected explosion Ron and his mates were told to turn and face away because the intense light of the explosion could harm their eyes. Nobody mentioned fall-out.

Ron was lucky. Unlike so many of his companions that day, his health did not suffer from what he had been part of. Many years later he told me what it had been like, the light, the noise, the blast wave. And he told me something else. If ever you have sailed the seas in a big ship you will know it is followed by seagulls that treat it as their home, flying above and around it, perching on its rails and masts – and waiting for the daily event of the waste food from the galley being dumped overboard. Ron's ship had its share of faithful followers and the air always rang with the cries of the gulls. But on the morning of the test, when the crew came out onto the main deck, it was unnaturally quiet. There were no birds to be seen.

Afterwards Ron asked around – he wanted to know if this had happened to the other ships. It had. Overnight all of the ships that were anywhere even remotely near the Monte Bello Islands had lost their birds. Every single one had fled into the night. Would that our scientists had been as wise as the birds. Or the bees – which refused to leave their hives for days after the [Chernobyl](#) disaster, while the cows refused to drink from the stream and the worms burrowed deep into the ground. But the people who witnessed these things weren't scientists, just simple country folk. What would they know? What nature knows is that human cleverness has left life on earth with a deadly legacy of nuclear waste which we are incapable of dealing with. All we do is create more – because we can.

Since the invention of agriculture – which some see as the [starting point](#) for all the damage

humanity has caused not just to itself but to its one and only home – all farmers have sought to improve their seeds or animals. They do it by selective breeding, a slow process but the one that nature also uses. It allows time to spot mistakes and dead ends. And unlike modern man, nature doesn't do things on an industrial scale; that produces deserts. Endless acres of just one crop are as much of an ecological wasteland as miles of sand. But, for the benefit of humanity, selective breeding is still producing new varieties, staple grains for instance, that are drought, flood, pest or disease resistant.

Enter GM science, the El Dorado of the biotech companies, with their vision of patenting nature and controlling the world's supply of food. Despite all the propaganda they haven't yet succeeded in producing seeds that are genuinely better than those delivered by more conventional breeding. The promised high yields of GM crops fail after a few years when conventional seeds bred for a higher yield maintain their increased yield. Nor has GM technology produced reliable pest- or disease-resistant crops. All it has really done is produce crops that can withstand heavy applications of pesticides and herbicides – made of course by the same biotech companies.

Nature fights back in its own way. Weeds that are meant to be killed have become 'super-weeds' resistant to herbicides. The discovery across the world of GM crops growing wild in places where no GM crops are grown, due to using GM animal feed and [spillage](#) of GM grain during transport, is increasing every day. Rather than producing wonder-crops, the science that created GM plants simply because it can has left us with contaminated conventional crops, super-weeds and weed-killer in our [urine](#). And like the problem of nuclear waste, we may have got to the point of being unable to control the damage GM technology has done and is continuing to do to our bodies, our food supply, our environment and all the other forms of life that share our planet.

Not satisfied with manipulating genes, for years we have been trying to manipulate the weather, in particular creating rain by [cloud seeding](#), something the UK was keen on from 1949 to 1955. Secret experiments were conducted by the MoD. Their aim was to create artificial rain and snow; possible uses included "bogging down enemy movement" and "incrementing the water flow in rivers and streams to hinder or stop enemy crossings". They also saw rainmaking as having a potential "to explode an atomic weapon in a seeded storm system or cloud. This would produce a far wider area of radioactive contamination than in a normal atomic explosion". A 'normal' atomic explosion sends radioactive fallout around the world. How much further do you want to go?

It must feel wonderfully powerful to be able to create rain when you want to, but in any kind of experiment involving natural processes blinkered experimenters tend to look for (and see) only the results they want. Little thought is given to the precautionary principle or to unforeseen damaging effects. And no thought at all is given to the amazingly delicate balance of a living ecology, a balance that rules that any change, any loss or addition, affects everything else. The butterfly flapping its wings in Tokyo is not just a pretty concept; it's for real. And although the MoD kept trying to deny it, documents show that the cloud seeding experiments code-named 'Operation Cumulus' was the cause of the terrible flash flood in [Lynmouth](#) in 1952. People died and the heart of a community was ripped out – "because we can".

But the early cloud seeding experiments are only a part of the efforts being made to control the weather, also known as EnMod – Environmental Modification. One has to look at the whole worrying issue of [chemtrails](#) (condensation trails from aircraft carrying substances

that can alter cloud and weather patterns). And HAARP. Please don't ignore [HAARP](#). The difficulty with all of this is that it can be so easily dismissed by the powers that be as paranoid conspiracy theory. Except the planning, reports and discussions by military, government and research personnel are a matter of official record.

In 1987 the UN brought in the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques. Yet in 2007, The (UN) World Meteorological Organisation published a statement that included 'Guidelines for Planning of Weather Modification Activities.' The spectre of climate change had made EnMod acceptable. In November 2010 the UN imposed a [ban](#) on experiments in geo-engineering. Whether those carrying out the clandestine experiments will take any notice is doubtful.

The Case Orange [report](#) on chemtrails cites a number of US patents for the invention of a "Specific contrail generation apparatus for producing a powder contrail...." It also cites evidence that Raytheon could develop the capacity to "exercise a form of complete "weather control". Raytheon? Well, it goes without saying that the military are heavily involved, and although the stated purpose is to help combat climate change, one can't help feeling that it is the control of the weather that is aimed for. What a weapon that would be, but such control can, and will, have unforeseen effects on both humans and ecosystems.

What has worried me for a long time in all this is that, just as we believe we can control the weather, so, through science rather than moderating human activity, we can control climate change. There are many enthusiasts for the geo-engineering solution to climate change - I've been present at some of their PowerPoint presentations. And always I see two huge obstacles to their plans. It isn't that they dismiss those obstacles. They simply don't seem to take them into account.

The first thing is (and this applies particularly to governments and the military/industry complex) that absolutely no genuinely effective attempt will be made to halt climate change, let alone reverse it. To do that would in their view completely destroy our politico-economic system, than which nothing is more important. The second thing is that we are living on a planet with finite resources, resources that we are beginning to run out of, especially when it comes to such things as rare earths. They were rare when we first discovered them; they are far more so now. Put the two things together and this is the logical result:

As we go on using fossil fuels and leading lives that depend on energy and material consumption, climate change will go on evolving, and its effects will be ever greater. The earth will go on warming and the climate system we know breaking down. Any geo-engineering may control some of the process, but it requires resources and it will necessarily have to be renewed, updated and extended. We will become dependent on it. Its proponents say that using it will give us the time to do all the other, more painful things we need to do if the rise in global warming is to be kept within survivable limits.

But humanity will not alter its behaviour if it thinks it can rely on science to provide the answer and, as much as scientists will dislike this, science has been the cause of many of the problems we are now facing. Once we start using geo-engineering to control climate change there will be no end - all geo-engineering systems will have to be kept in place until we no longer have the resources to maintain control. No matter how strong our faith in our ability to control our world is, we will still run out of resources. And we will *still* be living with the problems of climate change. As will the rest of life on earth, because in this case, we

can't.

I'm not knocking science. It has produced some wonderful things. The knowledge it has gathered has helped us to lead cleaner, healthier lives. It has given us vaccines and helped to eradicate killer diseases. It has given us antibiotics - which, unthinkingly, we have used so enthusiastically that we have ended up with super-bugs that are resistant to most antibiotics. It has produced methods of communication and transport that were unimaginable two hundred years ago. It has enabled us to see far out into the universe and become aware of all the wonders it holds. Yet, instead of making man feel truly humble in the face of such a rich immensity, there is always that desire to reach out further, to own and control as much as we can.

But we can't even control ourselves. We seem blind to the fact we might be just about to walk off a cliff - because we can.

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