

The Stomach-churning Violence of Monsanto, Bayer and the Agrochemical Oligopoly

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As humans, we have evolved with the natural environment over millennia. We have learned what to eat and what not to eat, what to grow and how to grow it and our diets have developed accordingly. We have hunted, gathered, planted and harvested. Our overall survival as a species has been based on gradual, emerging relationships with the seasons, insects, soil, animals, trees and seeds. And out of these relationships, we have seen the development of communities [whose rituals and bonds have a deep connection](#) with food production and the natural environment.

However, over the last couple generations, agriculture and food production has changed more than it had done over previous millennia. These changes have involved massive social upheaval as communities and traditions have been uprooted and have entailed modifying what we eat, how we grow our food and what we apply to it. All of this has been driven by [geopolitical concerns](#) and powerful commercial interests with their proprietary chemicals and patented seeds. The process of neoliberal globalisation is [accelerating the process](#) as farmers are encouraged to produce for global supply chains dominated by transnational agribusiness.

Certain crops are now genetically engineered, the range of crops we grow has become less diverse, synthetic biocides have been poured on crops and soil and our bodies have been subjected to a chemical bombardment. We have arrived at a point where we have lost touch with our deep-rooted [microbiological and social connection with nature](#) and have developed an arrogance that has placed 'man' above the environment and all other species. One of the consequences is that we have paid an enormous price in terms of the consequent [social, environmental and health-related](#) devastation.

Despite the promise and potential of science, it has too often in modern society become a tool of vested interests, an ideology wrapped in the vestiges of authority and the 'superstition' that its [corporate-appointed priesthood](#) should not be challenged nor questioned. Instead of liberating humankind, it has now too often become a tool of deception in the hands of companies like Monsanto, Bayer and Syngenta which make up the oligopoly that controls what is an increasingly globalised system of modern food and agriculture.

These corporations have successfully instituted the notion that the mass application of biocides, monocropping and industrial agriculture are necessary and desirable. [They are not](#). However, these companies have used their science and propaganda to project certainty in order to hide the fact that they have no real idea what their products and practices are doing to human health or the environment (and in cases when they do know, they do their

best to [cover it up](#) or hide behind the notion of '[commercial confidentiality](#)').

Based on their [limited, tainted studies and co-opted version of science](#), they say with certainty that, for example, genetically engineered food and glyphosate are 'safe'. And when inconvenient truths do emerge, they will mobilise their [massive lobbying resources](#) to evade regulations, they will seek to [hide the dangers of their products or they will set out to destroy scientists](#) whose findings challenge their commercial bottom line.

Soil microbiologists are still trying to fully comprehend [soil microbes and how they function as an integrated network in relation to plants](#). The agrochemical sector has little idea of how their biocides have affected soils. It merely churns out public relations spin that their inputs are harmless for soil, plants and human health. Such claims are not based on proper, in-depth, long-term studies. They are based on a don't look, don't find approach or a [manipulation of standards and procedures](#) that ensure their products make it on to the commercial market and stay there. The devastating impacts on soil are [increasingly clear to see](#).

And what are these biocides doing to us as humans? [Numerous studies](#) have linked the increase in pesticide use with spiraling rates of ill health. Kat Carroll of the National Health Federation is [concerned about the impacts on human gut bacteria](#) that play a big role in how [organs function](#) and our neurological health. The gut microbiome can contain up to six pounds of bacteria and is what Carroll calls 'human soil'. She says that with their agrochemicals and food additives, powerful companies are attacking this 'soil' and with it the sanctity of the human body.

And her concerns seem valid. Many [important neurotransmitters are located in the gut](#). Aside from affecting the functioning of major organs, these transmitters affect our moods and thinking. Feed gut bacteria a cocktail of biocides and is it any surprise that many diseases are increasing?

For instance, findings published in the journal 'Translational Psychiatry' provide strong evidence that gut bacteria can have [a direct physical impact on the brain](#). Alterations in the composition of the gut microbiome have been implicated in a wide range of neurological and psychiatric conditions, including autism, chronic pain, depression, and Parkinson's Disease.

Environmental campaigner Dr Rosemary Mason has [written extensively](#) on the impacts of agrochemicals (especially glyphosate) on humans, not least during child and adolescent development. In her numerous documents and papers, she cites a plethora of data and studies that link the use of agrochemicals with various diseases and ailments. She has also noted the impact of these chemicals on the human gut microbiome.

Writing in The Guardian, [Mo Costandi](#) discusses the importance of gut bacteria and their balance. In [adolescence](#) the brain undergoes a protracted period of heightened neural plasticity, during which large numbers of [synapses are eliminated](#) in the prefrontal cortex and a wave of 'myelination' sweeps across this part of the brain. These processes refine the circuitry in the prefrontal cortex and increase its connectivity to other brain regions. Myelination is also critical for normal, everyday functioning of the brain. Myelin increases a nerve fibre's conduction velocity by up to a hundred times, and so when it breaks down, the consequences can be devastating.

Other recent work shows that gut microbes [control the maturation and function](#) of [microglia](#), the immune cells that eliminate unwanted synapses in the brain; age-related changes to gut microbe composition might regulate [myelination and synaptic pruning](#) in adolescence and could, therefore, contribute to [cognitive development](#). Upset those changes, and, As Mason argues, there are going to be serious implications for children and adolescents. Mason places glyphosate at the core of the ailments and disorders currently affecting young people in Wales and the UK in general.

Yet we are still being subjected to an unregulated cocktail of agrochemicals which end up interacting with each other in the gut. Regulatory agencies and governments appear to work hand in glove with the agrochemical sector.

[Carol Van Strum](#) has released documents indicating collusion between the manufacturers of dangerous chemicals and regulatory bodies. [Evaggelos Vallianatos](#) has highlighted the massive fraud surrounding the regulation of biocides and the wide scale corruption at laboratories that were supposed to test these chemicals for safety. Many of these substances were not subjected to what was deemed proper testing in the first place yet they remain on the market. [Shiv Chopra](#) has also highlighted how various dangerous products were allowed on the commercial market and into the food chain due to collusion between these companies and public officials.

Powerful transnational corporations are using humanity as their collective guinea pig. But those who question them or their corporate science are automatically labelled anti-science and accused of committing crimes against humanity because they are preventing their products from being commercialised 'to help the poor or hungry'. Such attacks on critics by company mouthpieces who masquerade as public officials, independent scientists or independent journalists are mere spin. They are, moreover, based on the [sheer hypocrisy](#) that these companies (owned and controlled by elite interests) have humanity's and the environment's best interests at heart.

Many of these companies have historically [profited from violence](#). Unfortunately, that character of persists. They directly profit on the back of militarism, whether as a result of the US-backed 'regime change' in [Ukraine](#) or the US invasion of [Iraq](#). They also believe they can cajole (poison) nature by means of chemicals and [bully governments](#) and [attack critics](#), while rolling out [propaganda campaigns](#) for public consumption.

Whether it involves [neocolonialism and the destruction of indigenous practices and cultures](#) under the guise of 'development', the [impoverishment of farmers in India](#), the [twisting and writing of national and international laws](#), the [destruction of rural communities](#), the [globalisation of bad food and illness](#), the deleterious impacts on health and soil, the [hollowing out of public institutions](#) and the range of human rights abuses we saw documented during [The Monsanto Tribunal](#), what we are witnessing is structural violence in many forms.

Pesticides are in fact "[a global human rights concern](#)" and are in no way vital to ensuring food security. Ultimately, what we see is ignorance, arrogance and corruption masquerading as certainty and science.

"... when we wound the planet grievously by excavating its treasures - the gold, mineral and oil, destroy its ability to breathe by converting forests into urban wastelands, poison its waters with toxic wastes and exterminate other

living organisms - we are in fact doing all this to our own bodies... all other species are to be enslaved or driven to extinction if need be in the interests of human 'progress'... we are part of the same web of life -where every difference we construct artificially between 'them' and 'us' adds only one more brick to the tombstone of humankind itself." - from 'Micobes of the World Unite!' By [Satya Sager](#)

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