

This magazine is not a newspaper



La rivista

# DINAMICA®

TAI CHI CHUAN E ARTI ASSOCIATE

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太極拳



PICCIOLI & TOMAS 2023





# Seminario di Tai Chi Chuan

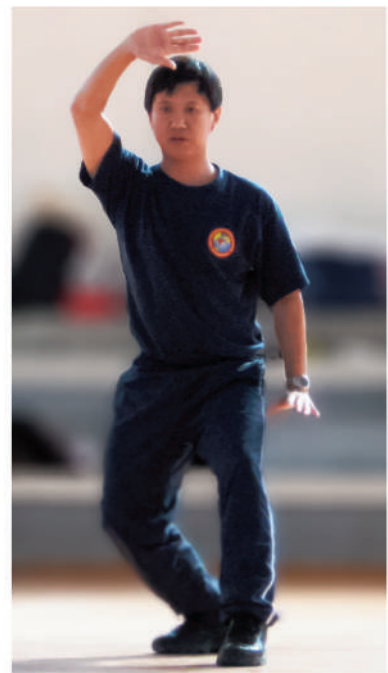
condotto dal  
**Gran Maestro  
Yang Jun**



**1-2 giugno**  
Forma 103 a mani nude  
**3-4 giugno**  
Forma con la Spada



**1-4 giugno 2023**  
**Roma, Italia**



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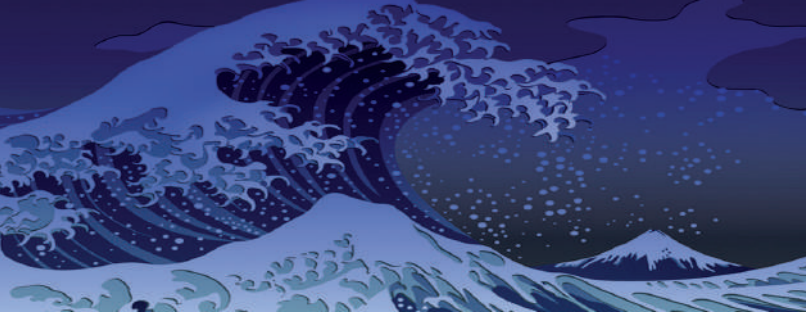
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The Association 'Dinamica® Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate A.S. .D.' was created by people who gathered in order to activate and share their potential through arts and psycho-physical disciplines, specifically Tai Chi Chuan. Alongside Tai Chi Chuan, it deals with other arts and activities, meditation techniques, breathing and Qi Gong, Taoist Yoga ( Tao Yin ) to name a few. The association is affiliated to the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association (IYFTCCA®). Its aim is to promote Tai Chi Chuan and to offer the opportunity to learn and practice the traditional Tai Chi Chuan following the method and teachings of Master Yang Jun, the current 5th generation lineage holder of the creator of the Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.



**S**pring marks the awakening of nature after the long winter hibernation and invites us to get outside, to move, to feel the expansion of energy around us. Tai Chi Chuan is an extraordinary way to experience these moments. Practicing our forms among the trees, seeing the light and feeling the increasing sun warmth, breathing and moving energy inside us are useful to loosen the stiffness accumulated during the cold months. It is like getting rid of an armour.

Let us enjoy this great luck ! In fact everyone knows the Spring, but not everyone has the privilege of having encountered Tai Chi.

**Roberto Seghetti**



# Internal and external practice are both important, they are “One” or Tai Chi Chuan

*Second part of the interview with Grand Master Yang Jun, 5° generation lineage holder of the Yang family Tai Chi Chuan*

**By Anna Siniscalco**

*Technical Director Dinamica®Tai Chi Chuan e Arty Associate asd.  
IYFTCCA Academy Instructor, Disciple of Grand Master Yang Jun*



## **How is teaching in the West different from teaching in China?**

There are no differences from a technical point of view, but from a cultural point of view. The cultural background is different, so the cultural approach related to the discipline must be explained. It is necessary to explain how some philosophical principles are connected with our culture. It is essential to understand these aspects well. Also about Wu De (martial arts moral code), protocol, respect and behaviour: this is connected with the cultural dimension too. If you consider only the explanation of the body movement, I see no difference, we are all human beings. What I think is different, is where the student come from: people who come from cultures other than Chinese are more serious in studying and this is due to the fact that these people need to get to know a new culture. For Chinese people some things are taken for granted, so much that you can neglect them, without considering their true meaning.

In the West, scholars, and those who are truly interested, look at Chinese culture as a treasure.

Personally I have met non-Chinese people who have studied and understood Chinese culture in general and Tai Chi Chuan in particular very well. However, many people still approach Tai Chi Chuan as a physical exercise, neglecting the cultural aspect, the history and philosophy.

**As head of the school and direct descendant of the founder of the Yang style, what responsibility do you feel and what are the additional goals you intend to pursue?**

Personally I've never thought I am a master. I simply feel is that I studied longer than other people. By chance, I was born near the source. However, I don't feel like a master: along the Tai Chi Chuan path we are all students. In the Tai Chi Chuan way we share the technique (Chuan) but there is also the Chi (the boundary line, the limit, the end) or our ability to understand. If a practitioner think they have already understood, they will no longer be able to expand their understanding of the teachings.

I see this as a form of respect for myself, and for those who taught me, I do not identify with those who look down at others. I was lucky because I grew up with my grandfather, Grand Master Yang Zhenduo: he supported me and solicited the potential that allowed me to be what I am today. Each generation has made its contribution to the spread of the culture and practice of Tai Chi Chuan, to foster health and longevity in people.

I look at ancestors as a model and would like to live up to them by making my contribution. Also out of respect for the commitment and lessons received from my grandfather, not for my own success but for that of future generations. They will be the ones who will judge me and will be able to tell if my teaching was positive or negative.

**Practising indoors, practising outdoors: what is the difference from an energy point of view?**

I find no difference, except in how comfortable it can be; for example the regularity of the pavement and the oxygenation. Being in contact with nature is healthier, but having a smooth and regular floor allows you to better refine your movements and you are more stable. If you then have a regular outdoor floor ....

Outside there may be disturbing noises, but even in a gym there may be loud music or other music that can disturb. In Shanghai people also practise in the streets, in the middle of traffic; for us it would be impossible. The difference is in our mind, which can filter, leave out what it sees or hears, amplify or minimise.

Certainly, the oxygenation of practising outdoors is preferable because it is healthier, but they are personal preferences.

**How much can mental centring for body harmony help?**

This question is about internal/external practice. They are both important, they are "One" or Tai Chi Chuan. If there is no external there can be no internal, if there is no internal there can be no external. We must not lose focus.

We start on the external level: body structure, how to take steps, positions, hands and arms. These are all external aspects, but the goal of Tai Chi Chuan is not to realise external movements, but the harmonious flow of breathing, energy and movements. The direction towards this goal is given by the method of practice. Moving energy like a cloud is related to martial arts but the work is internal. It happens through the differentiation of the 3 parts: body, mental attitude, mind and spirit, energy.

We are learning the method, how to learn the right energy. In China we have a saying: learn the movement and then forget the movement, whoever says this has knowledge of internal martial arts. The external appearance, the shape, must change into the non-form, transforming and dissolving.

*Mà you scíng, wéi wū scíng*

# The heavy is the root of the light

By Roberto Seghetti

*Journalist and Editor-in-Chief*



'The heavy is the root of the light. The quiet control the agitation.'<sup>1</sup> In this passage of the Tao Te Ching ascribed to Lao Tzu, father of the philosophical current of Taoism (6th century B.C., according to the assessment of most commentators) we can essentially find two of the cornerstone of Tai Chi Chuan, which has precisely one of its roots in Taoism.

The first is about posture and the actual energy source. When we practice our martial arts, our head must be upright and straight (first of the ten essential principles provided by Master Yang Chenfu, 3° lineage holder after the founder of Yang style, Yang Luchan) as if pulled up by a string. The lower part of the body must feel heavy, all the weight on our feet. In the seventh of the ten principles (synchronise upper and lower body) we read that the source of energy is in the roots, namely the heavy part, and from there it can be directed, with flexibility, towards the lighter part: 'With its roots in the foot, emitting from the leg, governed by the waist, manifesting in the hand and fingers - from feet to leg to waist - one impulse, one breath. When the hands move, the waist moves and the legs move and the gaze moves along with them.'

These indications do not really concern only the Yang style, but the whole world of Tai Chi Chuan. For example, Li Yixu, grandson of Wu Yuxiang (the founder of the Wu style) says in the fourth of the five principles (elsewhere we talk about five words), which pick up and embrace a concept attributed to the mythical founder of Tai Chi Chuan, Zhang San Feng: 'To emit energy one must know its source; it comes from the heels, it is commanded by the waist, it manifests itself in the fingers and is emitted from the dorsal column'.<sup>2</sup>

The second is about the calm mind, a concept that covers both the martial aspect as well as the energetic and spiritual ones. About this, Li Yixu says in the first of the five principles: 'Without calmness of mind there is no concentration and the execution of the smallest movement, whether backwards, left or right, will be disordered'. The same applies to the Yang style. In the tenth essential, not randomly titled "Seeking quiescence within movement", Yang Chen Fu left us an indication about the body, the cultivation of energy, the spirit: "External martial arts prize leaping and stomping, and they do this until the breath (IQ) and strength are exhausted, so that after practicing they are all out of breath. In Tai Chi Chuan we use quiescence to overcome movement, and even in movement, still have quiescence. So when you practise the form, the slower the better! When you do it slowly your breath becomes deep and long, the 'Chi' sinks into the Dantien naturally, there is no harmful constrictions or enlargement of the blood vessels. If the student tries carefully, they may be able to comprehend the meaning behind these words' .



1 Lao Tzu. Tao The Ching. Adelphi editore 1973. Pag.76

2 Catherine Despeux. "Taiji Quan". Edizioni Mediterranee 2007. Pag. 105

3 Ibidem. Pag 104



# Herbicides and pesticides: what price is worth paying to get rid of weeds?

**By Alberta Tomassini**

*Researcher, Department of Environmental Biology, University of Rome, La Sapienza*



"Without chemical compounds, life would be impossible" says a Monsanto company advertising poster dated 1977 and in the same poster we read : "Also nature is a chemical process,". This is undoubtedly true, but in a book that I am actually reading and that has nothing to do with the topic I am discussing, I find a passage that pushes the reflection further: 'They considered themselves like gods. They believed that everything on which they cast their greedy gaze was rightfully theirs, in the vain belief that their values, their customs were superior to all others. (quoted from 'The English Botanist' - N.C.Vosseler - Superbeat Neri Pozza 2019)'. In conclusion, are we, human beings, precisely behaving in this way towards everything around us?

This leads to the purpose of this article; in our previous issues we talked about grasses, weeds and pests. The question now is: how are we getting rid of these weeds? At what price?

For once, I am happy about our country's 'backwardness' compared to America. We are about twenty years behind in the massive introduction in agriculture of chemical herbicides and pesticides, so we can take advantage of all the scientific data accumulated in the meantime on the toxicity of these products.

From the birth of agriculture until the XX century, a period not by chance called “of blood, sweat and tears” (Zimdahl 1999), weed control was in fact manual. Practices such as quick soil coverage and crop rotation were proposed in Cuppari's *Lezioni di Agricoltura* (Lessons on Agriculture ) 1869.

In Italy, the spread of chemical products had been slow, due in part to the abundance of cheap labour available at the time and the low level of mechanisation in the distribution of herbicides. However, in the mid-1960s, the number of herbicides introduced on the market increased exponentially, while in America the initial criticisms had been raised about the risks to man and the environment due to the increasingly widespread use of chemical substances for crop protection (see, for example, the report on the indiscriminate use of DDT, contained in Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962).

Two tragic events in the mid-1970s increased attention to this problem in our country too: the use of defoliant herbicides during the Vietnam War and the accident at the trichlorophenol factory in Seveso. Many of us have memories of these events, but more history about it is not a waste of time, especially for young people.

In Vietnam, the Americans were losing the war ; the Vietcong's war tactic was to strike the enemy and then retreat into the forests so Robert McNamara (US Secretary of Defense) came up with the decisive idea to destroy their forests!

To reveal the Vietcong's hiding places and paths, the Americans sprayed huge areas of forest with tons of a defoliant containing, among others, dioxin, causing not only immediate deaths, but also the intoxication of thousands of people. More than 3 million people were contaminated, 500,000 Vietnamese civilians died, 500,000 children were born with deformities, and thousands of American veterans are still recovering with long-term effects.

For these highly toxic substances were created curious names: orange agent , but also pink, purple, white, blue, green, a lethal 'rainbow'; of the orange agent alone, 75 million litres were sprayed, 4 million people exposed, 20,000 square kilometres the area of land was made completely uninhabitable and not cultivable for decades.







All defoliants were produced by the same company: **Monsanto**.

But what connects Vietnam to Seveso? It is July 10th, 1976. Following an explosion at an ICMESA chemical plant, which produced chemicals for the production of herbicides, a cloud of dioxin spread through the atmosphere. Among the approximately 40,000 people affected, there were about 700 intoxicated people with serious ailments that have lasted for years. The exposure was not fatal, but there were several cases of chloracne, a dermatitis, widespread especially among the children. A far more significant consequence was that based on speculation about a possible teratogenic effect of TCDD, hundreds of women decided to have abortion because of the risk of fetal malformations.

It was not just Monsanto. All manufacturers of herbicides and pesticides have always argued that they are not obliged to remove their products from our homes and workplaces until it is demonstrated that these chemicals slowly penetrating our bodies are dangerous. These companies don't even think they have to prove their products are safe before exposing entire populations, as

well as animals, plants and soil! And then we can read articles with unequivocal titles: 'Your Body Is a Corporate Test Tube' or 'You Are a Guinea Pig'!

To understand the enormity of this problem, we must examine the situation today: Roundup® is the worldwide most used herbicide with its active compound, glyphosate, distributed by former Monsanto (presently Bayer). Its use has risen over the years, along with transgenic crops (sold by the same company Ed.), from 67 million kilos in 1995 (the year before the first GMO fields) to 826 million kilos in 2014. Glyphosate-containing herbicides are used several times during the ripening of crops either to kill weeds or to desiccate, just before harvesting, in the case of wheat or sugar cane, for example. It can be found in their leaves, grains, and fruit and cannot be removed by washing or cooking.

The use of genetically modified 'Roundup® -resistant' plants such as maize, soya, rapeseed, alfalfa and sugar beet has permitted an easy weed control without affecting the plants to be harvested, but this means that glyphosate can be present in derived foods. Unfortunately, the weeds are learning to resist this herbicide, which increases the amount required for each application.

There are now numerous scientific studies demonstrating the harmful effects of herbicides containing glyphosate. Which certainties?

1) They are the most widely applied herbicides in the world and in some regions, plants



genetically modified to resist glyphosate are the only ones present  
2) These herbicides contaminate groundwater and accumulate

3) Their permanence in water and soil can be long and vary from a few days to several months or even a year, depending on the type of soil.

4) Glyphosate residuals are present in all harvested GM soya. Measured residue levels are higher than expected compared to a decade ago due to the increasing intensity of its use and the propensity to use it just before harvest, increasing exposure levels.

5) The environmental impact is also undeniable. Numerous studies show changes in soil microbial populations, an increase in plant-damaging fungi, morphological and reproductive changes in soil worms, and toxicity to plants and aquatic animals.



And what about us, the human beings and the animals? Studies assessing the effects at low but repeated doses (the more treacherous ones), generally considered 'safe', have shown liver and kidney damages; possible carcinogenic effects are under scrutiny by the IARC, the International Agency for Research on Cancer; studies on laboratory animals and pets have no longer any doubt about the harmfulness of glyphosate-containing herbicides. Urinary excretion levels increased from 0.024 µg/L in 1993-1996 to 0.314 µg/L in 2014-2016 and reached 0.449 µg/L in 2014-2016.

Without being boring and too prolix, I just mention the recent scientific titles published in international journals: "Does Glyphosate Affect the Human Microbiota?" (2022), "Mechanisms of Glyphosate and Glyphosate-Based Herbicides Action in Female and Male Fertility in Humans and Animal Models" (2021), "Lifelong Exposure to a Low-Dose of the Glyphosate-Based Herbicide RoundUp® Causes Intestinal Damage, Gut Dysbiosis, and Behavioral Changes in Mice" (2022), "Concerns over use of glyphosate-based herbicides and risks associated with exposures: a consensus statement" (2016).

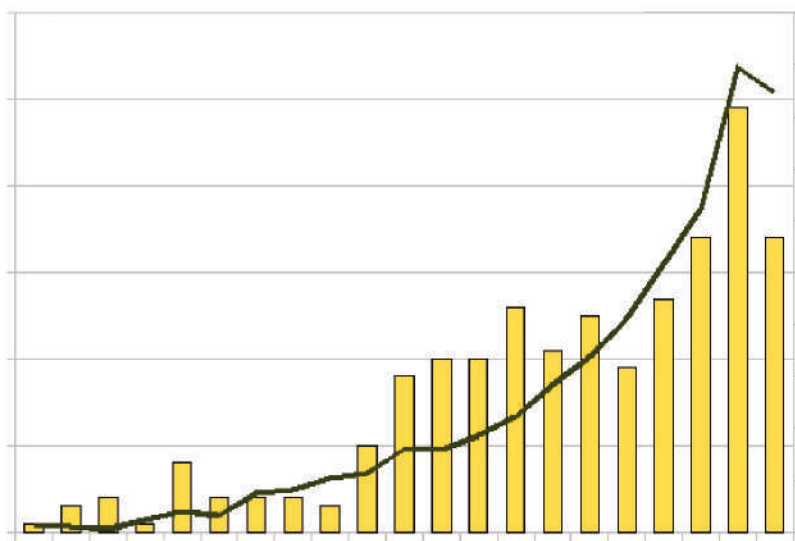
In particular, I am scared by a series of articles by the same authors (A. Samsel and S. Seneff): 'Glyphosate, Pathways to Modern Diseases: Celiac Spree and Gluten Intolerance - Manganese, Neurological Diseases and Associated Diseases - Cancer and Related Diseases'. Celiac disease? Neurological diseases? Cancer?

Coincidences? Falsified correlations? It is not for me to say, and, for the sake of the records, other articles conclude: 'Based on what we know, it appears that glyphosate is the least toxic herbicide compared to other pest control agents, if appropriate guidelines are followed during its application at the right concentrations' (Meftaul I. et al. 'Controversies over human health and ecological impacts of glyphosate: Is it to be banned in modern agriculture?' - Environmental Pollution 263, Part A 2020, 114372).

But the question remains: how is it possible that the authorities have not yet taken a clear position on the use of a dangerous product sold since 1974, that is to say almost 50 years ago? In March 2015, IARC (the Agency for Cancer Research) classified glyphosate as a 'probable human carcinogen' but in November EFSA (the European Food Safety Authority), updated the toxicological profile of glyphosate concluding that the pesticide is unlikely to be genotoxic and that it is not a cancer danger to humans. What about that?

The usual huge conflict of interest? Signatories of the Fao-Oms report, which exonerates glyphosate, are linked to ILSI, considered one of the world's largest agri-food lobby.

According to one Greenpeace report, ILSI Europe receives most of its operating and research funding from private companies, including glyphosate producers like Dow and Monsanto.



Glyphosate use and Celiac Disease

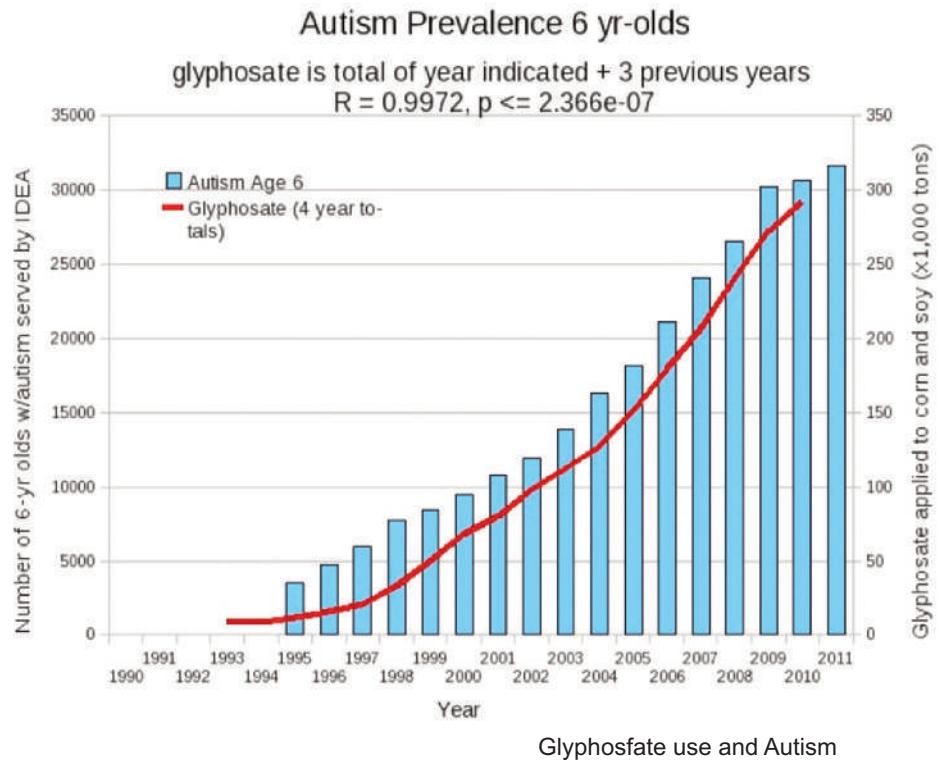
Besides ILSI's Health and Environmental Sciences Institute, (HESI) is mainly supported by private companies, including, again, glyphosate producers: Dow, Monsanto and Syngenta. Among its members there are other world giants such as Nestlé, Coca Cola, Exxon, Pepsi, Pfizer, McDonald's, Novartis and Procter&Gamble.

In fact, the use of glyphosate-containing products has been banned or restricted in some 20 countries including Malawi, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Bermuda, Costa Rica, St

Vincent and the Grenadines, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Italy, due to the adverse effects on human health and the environment, and in consideration of the increasing resistance developed in some pests and, even worse, the induction of antibiotic resistance in bacteria.

In Italy, at the moment, there is still a prohibition to use glyphosate in areas frequented by the population such as in parks, gardens, sports fields and recreational areas, children's playgrounds, courtyards and green areas inside school complexes and health facilities, as well as its use in fields to speed up ripening and harvesting. However, as COLDIRETTI (a national farmer's association) points out, the precautionary measures introduced at the national level should also consistently concern the import Italy of foreign products such as wheat from the United States and Canada, where intensive use of glyphosate is made precisely in the pre-harvest phase in a manner prohibited in Italy, where ripening takes place thanks to the sun. With the come into effect of the free trade agreement between the European Union and Canada (CETA) in 2020, imports of Canadian wheat in Italy have increased by 70% compared to the previous year, (total amount about 1.7 billion kilos ). The problem also concerns beans, lentils and chickpeas coming mainly from countries such as the United States and Canada where they are dried precisely with the use of glyphosate.

The decision by the EU's Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF) to extend by one year the authorisation for the use of glyphosate, which expires on December 15th, 2022, has been postponed by another month. At the meeting on 14 October, there was no qualified majority in favour of granting a one-year extension for the use of this pesticide. The abstention of Germany, France and Slovenia was decisive; Italy, on the other hand, voted in favour of the extension, contradicting its position against the use of glyphosate.



The European Commission, the administrative body led by Ursula von der Leyen has, according to the newspaper "Der Spiegel", 'decided to grant a temporary green light for another year, until 15 December 2023'.

However, the German federal government has already decided with a specific law to prohibit the use of glyphosate in Germany by 1 January 2024. Other countries that have taken a similar path are France and Austria, while Luxembourg was the first European country to ban the controversial herbicide from 31 December 2020.

Farmers undoubtedly have the right to fight weeds or pathogenic organisms. It is estimated that a sudden abandonment of herbicides and pesticides would lead to a decrease in production of at least 20%. Fortunately, more and more growers are sensitive to the environmental and health impacts of the excessive use of chemicals in agriculture and are exploring new applications of old techniques: solarisation, mulching and, above all, biological control and allelopathy (co-cultivation or spraying with extracts of plants specifically hostile to weeds).

In conclusion? Herbicides, pesticides, insecticides: yes or no? I am unable to say; the literature is endless, often contradictory, often manipulated; the economic interests are enormous and certainly predominant: it is advisable a minimum possible use, frequent and careful controls, zero residues on food.

It might work, but.... then I read that although the target organisms of glyphosate (as well as neonicotinoids) are plants and microorganisms, it also causes lethal and sub-lethal effects on honeybees, wild bees and various pollinating insects! If we keep in mind that three quarters of commercial crops globally depend, to some extent, on pollinators, then my final opinion is negative.



## **GLYPHOSATE pic**

### **1974 the first world launch 1977 Arrival in Italy 1988 Pompei Project**

Monsanto inaugurates 'Project Pompeii' with the clean-up of the archaeological site designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1977. The use of Roundup® makes it possible to restore access to and use of the main archaeological areas in a short time, without damage to structures and with minimal expenditure. The success of 'Project Pompeii' has contributed substantially to the acceptance of Roundup® as a crop protection agent for use in civil areas and in all non-agricultural segments.

### **2003-2007 High Concentration Roundup**

With the new millennium, Roundup® also enters into a new era: the idea of reducing the doses of the product to be used by increasing concentrations (to increase efficacy and reduce disposal costs) leads to the success of a series of highly concentrated liquid products, which have their forerunner in Roundup® Plus (2003), Roundup® 450 (2007) and later by Roundup® 450Plus (2008).

### **2013 Roundup Platinum, highest concentration, largest label: it is immediately a leader**

In 2013 the Roundup with the highest concentration of glyphosate 480 g/lit potassium salt was launched in all major European countries including Italy: Roundup Platinum.

## **MONSANTO**

1901: The company was founded by John Francis Queeny. The first product was saccharin sold to Coca-Cola as an artificial sweetener.

1920s: Monsanto expanded into the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors becoming the largest producer of aspirin and acetylsalicylic acid. At the same time it started producing PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), now considered potent carcinogens and the cause of diseases of the reproductive and immune systems.

1930s: created the first hybrid maize seed

1960s: started producing, together with Dow Chemical, Agent Orange, later used in Vietnam

1970s: Monsanto's partner, G.D. Searle, publishes numerous internal studies demonstrating the safety of aspartame, while the FDA revealed how it causes cancer.

1990s: Monsanto spent millions of dollars on lawsuits against federal laws that wanted to prevent dioxin and pesticide spills into ground water.

1994: The FDA approved 'rBGH', a synthetic bovine growth hormone produced by the genetically modified E.Coli bacterium, despite the numerous complaints from the scientific community about its dangerousness. Monsanto claimed that 'bacterial' milk full of antibiotics and hormones was not only safe, but also healthy

1995: The company started producing genetically modified crops tolerant to Roundup applications.

2018: Bayer, which had bought Monsanto for \$63 billion, set aside \$16 billion to deal with lawsuits filed over alleged links between Roundup and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

2021: Another \$4.5 trillion set aside by Bayer for lawsuits.

2023: Bayer declares that it will stop selling Roundup and herbicides containing glyphosate in the US, but will maintain sales to farmers.

Monsanto's philosophy is based on three main tactics:

- 1) buying or merging with major seed companies to gain total control;
- 2) acquiring as many patents as possible on genetic engineering techniques and genetically modified seed varieties to dominate the market;
- 3) demanding a written agreement which prevent farmers from saving the seeds, so that they have to buy them back every year.



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The World According to Monsanto  
Pollution, Corruption, and the Control of the World's Food Supply  
MARIE-MONIQUE ROBIN

First published as Le monde selon Monsanto by Éditions La Découverte, Paris, 2008

Published in the United States by The New Press, New York, 2010

# Are you born a virgin or do you become one?

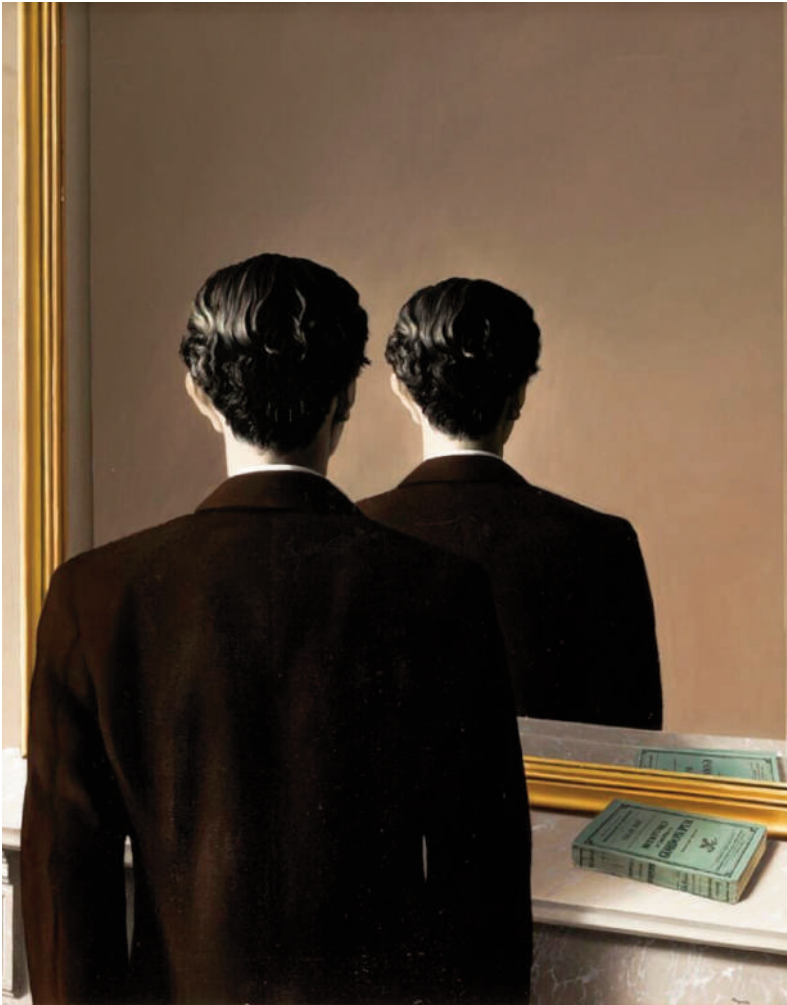
By Fausta Romano

*Psychologist, Psychotherapist, President of the 'A.B. Ferrari' Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research*



Some years ago, I had a fruitful reflection because of the analytical relationship with a patient. She suffered from a congenital disease that made her fragile and prone to the continuous formation of benign cysts in various parts of her body (tendons: the shortened Achilles tendon prevented her from resting her foot; nerves: the optic nerve was threatened by the formation of a new cyst, etc.), which were not always operable due to their dislocation. She was short, and she was limping, very clever. For about a year she has been complaining about a mother she described as bossy, cold, harsh and strict, a dominant and authoritarian character, who completely invaded her life, while her father was absent and distant. Then her mother, seriously ill, died in her arms, and this produced a complete change. Few days later, the patient came back carrying a big, heavy office bag, I asked what was inside. 'Einstein books', was the answer. 'And why are you interested in Einstein?' I asked in return. And these were her revealing words: 'I must study the law of relativity, in order to understand how to go





René Magritte, *La reproduction interdite*

back in time: I must be back with my mother'

I was sincerely surprised. The picture of a harsh and strict mother looked convincing to me up to that moment, and suddenly a new scenery opened before my eyes: a sweet mum, present, not like her father, a caressing mother, attentive to her needs, who often used kind and tender words.

Which one was true? Both of them I believe, since both were resulting from deep necessities, transcending reality. The change of scenery was due to the death of her mother and to how her father was able to take care of her till her last breath.

This was an example of how we built within ourselves, according to our needs, a proper theatre made of characters who changes depending on our changes and our life experiences.

It could be said that in western culture the Oedipus myth, with its dramatic nature, marks and accompanies the passage from

animality towards humanity in accordance with the need to dominate and direct the instinctual dimension, so within each human being, the emerging of the Oedipal constellation and its continuous transformations from birth to death accompanies the incessant emerging of psyche from the corporeal dimension, in a continuous and never totally resolved counterbalance of the two dimensions.

That distant experience with the young patient came back to my mind at this time, when facing with a very recent case that brought out the problem of gender identity. The headline could be the anguished question of a young woman, tormented by the psychotic obsession of having to eliminate her mother and sister in order to conquer her own femininity: "Are you born a virgin or do you become one?"

A question that urge us to ask ourselves a very topical problem in contemporary society and on which it is worth reflecting: to what extent is gender identity the result of genetic and perhaps even cultural determinism, and how much can free will contribute to its unfolding during each individual's life?

Thanks to the progress of scientific research, particularly in the field of genetics and surgery, it seems possible today to greatly extend the capacity for self-determination regarding both one's gender identity and other bodily matters.

But it is precisely clinical experience, even though in different clinical situations that leads me to argue that it is not so simple, as I have just mentioned in these two short stories. Why? Because I'm afraid that the progress of science in this field is often used in a non-constructive way, i.e. to

turn into a crack the conflict that, within certain limits, characterises the relationship between the bodily dimension and the psychic dimension in a functional way, always and in everyone.

"There is no escape: on earth we are still male or female. A realistic observation is sufficient to register sexual difference. But the unrepeatable uniqueness of physicality consists not so much in being a man or a woman, as in being that man and that woman, endowed with their own bodily apparatus' (Ferrari, 1998, In Carignani P. and others, 2022, p. 215).

What does this statement by Ferrari mean? That the path to becoming the men and women we

are is complex and not without obstacles, not without price. When we are facing the commitment and effort that this process involve, often the fantastic memory of one's childhood, when the magical thinking of the human being succeeds in making everything easy and desirable, constitutes both a warm refuge and a prison that suffocates and oppresses, an obstacle to the process of constructing identity and gender identity.

And I find that it is precisely this magical thinking that uses scientific progress in a dysfunctional way, so that, for example, I hear more and more often of children who, having reached the age of puberty, the age at which gender identity is defined through major transformations of the body, ask to change gender: male to female and

female to male. And it seems that surgery specialising in this type of intervention would be much more successful in this age group than in later years or adulthood. This gives rise to a complex ethical and psychological problem, because of the risk of a collusion between advances in science and a dangerous splitting of the mind from the body.

I wonder if it would not perhaps be more functional to try to accompany these children and young adolescents in getting to know their bodies, through gentle, loving, playful experiences, accompanying them in facing this complex and often not painless path, through which they can gradually choose their way of being. Accompany them in discovering and declining their way of being that man and that woman, to then make a responsible choice of their own gender identity; towards heterosexuality, towards homosexuality or whatever.

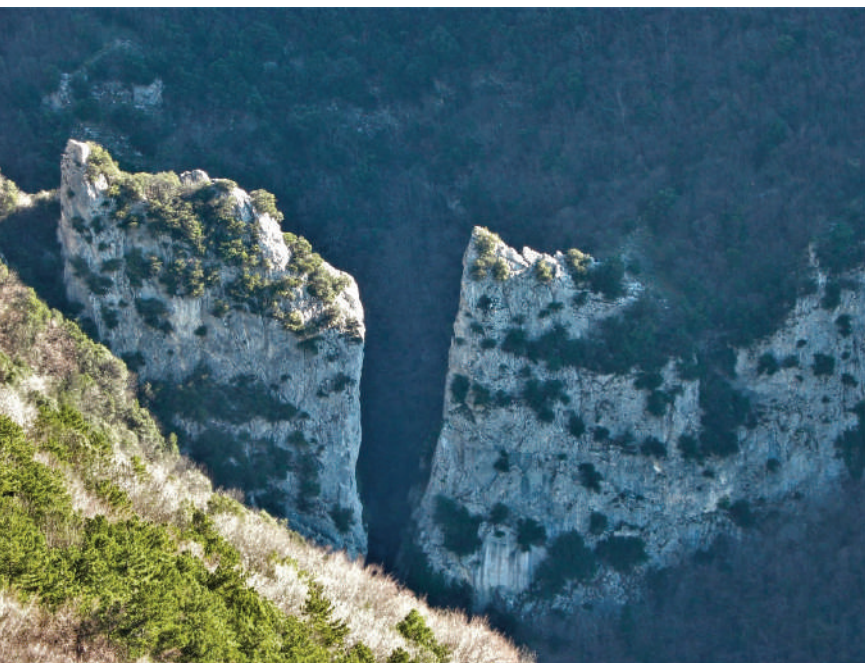
Indeed, we should reflect on the statement of those who claim to have discovered that they are homosexual, or transsexual, or, I might add, heterosexual.

Is this a discovery or a choice?

Geneticists themselves inform us that they have not discovered a gene for homosexuality and claim that gender determination is not only borne by the XX or XY gametes: it is distributed over the individual's entire chromosomal patrimony and also affects some specific neuronal receptors for testosterone. So, as far as we know until now, even from a bodily point of view, gender determination is something complex and far from linear.

Gender identity is the outcome of a complex process of constructing a scenario in which the individual plays the role of director: being born male or female is, as a rule, evidence, but this is not sufficient to determine the way in which each person will be able to decline his or her gender identity throughout the course of his or her existence.

Certainly from a subjective point of view, one may have the perception of undergoing what



instead seems to us to be rather the outcome of a complex and delicate process in which choice, self-determination and determinism are dynamically and variously intertwined.

In each of us, male and female modes of being coexist. These are two dynamic forces inherent in the deep area of corporeity, basic masculinity and femininity (Ferrari, 1998, in Carignani P, et al., 2022), two original elements, pre-existing at birth, immanent in the body-mind system, basic elements of our identity.

They can be considered a phylogenetically transmitted preconception inherent to the difference between the sexes, with a message concerning the functioning of the female and male systems. This message would refer both to the respect of ends and to the distribution of potentialities and peculiarities in the realisation of their respective tasks. (...). As a matter of fact, in harmonious situations, basic femininity and masculinity can function in accordance with the genetic patrimony, reinforcing gender identity or favouring identifications with the other sex, in a process that enriches the personality" (Ferrari, 1998, in Carignani P. and others, 2022).

This means that from the moment of birth we look for in the parental figures and, more generally, in the figures who take care of the infant, a fundamental confirmation of the preconception of both the maternal and paternal figures (ibid.), thus initiating the movement of the Oedipal scenario.

What function assumes all this in relation to the construction of each person's identity? Can this constellation ever fade on our psycho-physical horizon? Regardless of what the gender of the parents actually is, in reality (in contemporary society there are many possible combinations) female and male mental representations remain from beginning to end in our psychic scenario, prototypes of countless other characters that we discover as our lives unfold. This is functional to the complex and articulated transformative play of our identity configurations, which can only end with our very existence.

Therefore, from birth the individual is the director of this theatre on which their original components of basic masculinity and femininity will be articulated and take shape through the images of those who will take care of them from the beginning: images that will flank various other animate and inanimate characters in the course of his existence populating this scenario in an ever-widening breath, a matrix of continuous transformations, in relation to bodily transformations on the one hand and to the vicissitudes of life on the other.

This is why the term Oedipal Constellation is functional to express the breadth and complexity of this play of relations on the Oedipal scenario, in relation to the transformations of the way of understanding one's gender identity: this concept extends and makes the already complex Freudian formulation of Oedipal Complex widely dynamic (Ferrari, 1998),

The emphasis is on the movement that from the inside goes towards the outside, from the basic masculinity and femininity inherent in the inner world, goes towards masculine and feminine figures present in the outer world.

And no longer a movement that from the outside moves inwards: it is not a matter of influencing models or unconsciously incorporating them, but of a complex, self-constructing process.

I was intrigued years ago by the case of a little girl who was orphaned by her mother when she was almost a year old and since then only lived with her father: around the age of two and a





half/three she began to produce drawings in which a little girl appeared flanked by two adult characters, a man and a woman, whom she called to those who asked her: 'My father and my mother'.

I found it interesting that she was able to give representation to something that was within her, but which had not really found a reflection in her real life, except in her very first months.

The Oedipal Constellation, therefore, is configured as an incessant process that has no resolution, but which takes on different forms and functions in relation to the different forms and functions that accompany the individual in the course of his/her becoming.

Moreover, it is precisely the triangular dimension of the Oedipal Constellation, biological gender identity/femininity/masculinity, that provides our mental space with the depth necessary for us to better represent our corporeity and our affections: an internal space that allows us to continually modulate the right distance for the focus of our emotions.

In the first period of life, aspects linked to the need to survive prevail (phylogeny) (first of all possessiveness, jealousy, defence of territory, clear division of male and female tasks and functions, etc.): At a later stage, with the onset of adolescence, these aspects should give way to the emergence of an ontogenetic instance, according to which the individual is more interested in what is and is becoming: being rather than possessing.

It is a shared experience, our continually turning within ourselves to those original figures we call mother and father, namely the origin of our being in the world, who will remain our interlocutors, constant and changeable in their characteristics, just as constant and changeable will be our way of addressing them, until the last moment of our lives: warm and reassuring refuge and at the same time the theatre of more or less bloody and fierce conflicts and wars, where love and hate intertwine in a paradoxical and contradictory whole, figures in which we can recognise aspects of ourselves and from which to distinguish and differentiate ourselves, in any case a reference for us in our incessant search for ourselves.

Understood in this way, the Oedipal scenario is a constant reference for the individual: just like one of the constellations that oriented the traveller in the dark night, it orients through its transformations the unfolding of identity and gender identity and it is in turn oriented by it.



*Edipo re di Max Ernst*

#### Bibliographical reference:

Ferrari A.B. (1998), L'alba del pensiero, in Carignani P., Bucci P., Ghigi I., Romano F., (eds.), Armando. B. Ferrari. Il pensiero e le opere, Vol 1, La teoria, FrancoAngeli, 2022, Milan.

## Matsuo Basho

*A banana tree  
blowing in the wind at night  
rain dripping into the bucket*



Matsuo Basho (alias Matsuo Kinsaku) is one of the greatest Japanese poet and author of famous Haiku.

Poem from "Sotto la luna un bruco (Under the moon a caterpillar)" - translated from Japanese by Alessandro Clementi degli Albizzi - Ponte alle Grazie Publisher. Pg.13

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AND THE WAR, NO  
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THIS YEAR, THANKS!

