

Viewpoint: 'Nature fetishism' — Affluent Westerners increasingly reject science, spreading unwarranted suspicions about nuclear energy, biotech-modified seeds and vaccines

If you asked people to name the most dangerous ideologies of our time, common answers would be authoritarianism, racism and Islamist extremism. I'd propose another contender: nature fetishism, which is the belief that "natural" things are good and "unnatural" ones bad.

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For decades, if you lived in a rich country, nature fetishism was a low-risk investment in building your personal identity: you could safely oppose nuclear energy knowing that you would still have hot showers; you could refuse measles vaccines knowing that enough other children were jabbed to keep yours safe; and you could reject GM foods knowing that you yourself wouldn't starve.

Nature fetishists believe that modernity kills. They prize "purity" and despise corporations. Opponents can be dismissed as shills for the nuclear, pharmaceutical and/or GM industries. Yet most fetishists are cannier than they sound. Few will endanger or even inconvenience themselves for their beliefs.

For instance, the fad for treating cancer with herbs instead of drugs and chemotherapy seems to have faded. Nature fetishists are savvy in choosing which bits of modernity to reject. "Nobody seems to have a problem with the unnaturalness of indoor plumbing," notes the writer Joel Silberman.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)