

Food and Cultural (In)Compatibilities

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12 Points of View

Edited by

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FOREWORD

A tradition of an interdisciplinary roundtable has already been established at the Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timisoara (UMFTVB). 2020 marks 10 years since specialists in various fields of knowledge gathered themselves around a common interest and began collecting points of view of both personal and professional experiences, sharing their research.

Human beings are highly complex. It would be not only unjust, but a truly grave error of research to regard ourselves as numbers – as pathological situations, simple social stand-ins, or as study objects sliced into dozens of samples of scientific interest, depending on the approach taken.

A long-term relationship between various departments has helped develop an international research centre, supervised by UMFTVB, which in turn has enabled a string of anthropological conferences and an increase in work partnerships, in an extraordinary diversity of well-connected scientific languages, from the most diverse corners of the world. Timisoara has housed, along the years, in this context—the context of health from an anthropological perspective—scholars from Latin America and Asia, the Middle East and Europe, the USA and Africa.

Abiding the new structure set by the pandemic—the year of Covid-19—which has changed everyone's work schedule, our roundtable has taken place in front of computer screens. Thus, the International Conference Food (In)compatibilities – Cultural (In)compatibilities, organised by UMFTVB Romania and the Artship Foundation USA took place online, between the 6th and 9th May 2020, the result of which is the current volume, which we dedicate, first of all, to our young medical students with a special interest in (in)formative values.

The starting point proposed by the organisers has developed from a series of shared questions and interests, which come from different points of view.

What really is hunger for the human being of the 21st century? How do we understand the cultural heritage of food? How does this define the stratification of society and how, together with its methods of satisfaction, has food become science and art as well?

A rigorously scientific look at the interplay of three layers of fundamental analysis has led to a truly original convergence of several ideas:

- I. Satisfying the Hunger (A Cultural and Medical Approach)
- II. Taste and Distaste (A Cultural and Medical Approach)
- III. Integration / Incorporation with Cultural and Medical Consequences

In the broader and interdisciplinary inclusive context of the conference, the thematic cluster ‘Medicine and Food’ convened by professor Slobodan Dan Paich brings together research from archaeological excavations: from deciphering cuneiform tablets with specific recipes and the continuous practice of foraging wild edible plants, to the practices of Ayurveda medicinal foods carefully researched and continuously practised since prehistory. The research brought in the ‘Medicine and Food’ cluster includes geographic areas larger than the European cultural sphere, as well as ancient, indigenous peoples’ cultures, ingenious and refined rather than primitive. Food preparation is at the root of cultural experiences and sharing, often considered adjunct and not as distant from medical practices.

The ‘Medicine and Food’ cluster addresses tangible and intangible heritage, comparative cultural studies and migration of peoples, craft techniques and ideas, and it is a valuable contribution to both the humanities and medical disciplines.

In the often self-involved, incomprehensible gestures of established contemporary art practices, Gabriela Luca sees the ‘art of living’ as both a metaphorical and experiential nexus for understanding and practising the regenerative function of food in recovery processes.

The great Hippocrates said that food must be our medicine and medicine must be our food. Medicine is an art because it uses all five senses to form its full knowledge of the human being and its environment and is undoubtedly a science because it is verified by evidence. Therefore, it is the science and art of medicine, as physical and spiritual nourishment. From the anthropological point of view, eating means to ingest qualities, but also defects. Digestion is a double process: assimilation and distribution through transformation. This extends to the relationship between taste and distaste.

A major difference between us—Homo sapiens—and other species is precisely that we have transformed food into art and science. Under the simple concept that living is an art, in this conference, specialists in the humanities and doctors, artists in the fine arts, and masters in gastronomy form an effervescent roundtable, talked and worked in joint workshops to share ideas and enrich our knowledge.

Therefore, at the end of the meeting, we were able to gather answers in twelve studies which built, metaphorically speaking, a complete menu.

Part I, **Before Eating**, opens with an introductory analysis of hunger and the fear of tomorrow; an anthropological point of view by Gabriela-Mariana Luca. It continues with a transculturally rich and savoury mythological approach, an innovative practice of nourishment split between humans and gods.

Part II, **Dining with Gods**, emphasises Professor Slobodan Dan Paich's extraordinary cultural experience. The food of the gods was presented to us on several levels: psychological, molecular intelligence, embryology, mythology, and comparative cultural studies. More so, his contribution to the volume is also enriched by his own illustrations.

Harmoniously sustaining and completing their discourse on divine food, two authors with a vast experience on food, Chef Hitesh Gautam and Chef and lecturer Mehmet Kavanoz combine two different ancestral gastronomical and philosophical concepts: Ayurvedic and Islamic traditions.

As Artship have a dedicated formative component, they were again able to bring to light the contribution of a young student, Arda Özel, who took part in an archaeological excavation and who offers fascinating insight from a fieldwork perspective on Hittite cookery.

Part III, **Dining with Doctors**, brings us back to earth. We are now living in a world in which food can be both friend and foe. Elena Amăricăi, doctor and professor in paediatric rehabilitation, writes about the therapeutic role of food(s) in medicine. This introduces the perfect opportunity to invite Corina Beljung and Adrian Linte, nutrition specialists, to explain how to correctly access food in a time filled with contradictory information. This section of the dinner concludes with the interpretation of emotions which, incorrectly "digested", may somatise. Psychologist Teodora Anghel has the necessary knowledge and training to build the elegant speech which invites the reader to meditate on the subject.

Part IV, **Listening to Anthropologists**, nourishes the imagination by interweaving narrative and science. Anthropologists Jérôme Thomas, Frédéric Duhart and Xavier Medina build two different discourses, with different fieldwork and research experiences. The two chapters—one focusing on cannibalism, by Thomas, the other on the Spanish dish paella, by Duhart and Medina—are rigorously and scientifically argued, enlarging the area around two important coordinates of the volume: taste and distaste. They travel through times and spaces equally similar and dissimilar.

Part V, **Subtle Food**, helps us understand what type of nourishments words constitute, and how we can find satiety in performing arts and education.

Writer and theatre critic Daniela Şilindean takes a round trip through an experimental performance, fixating the idea of self-discovery and integrating cultural nourishment in this newly discovered self, confirming the fact that taste is cultivated.

Last but not least, the student workshop which provided the foundation for the chapter written by Diana Boc-Sinmarghitan, lecturer of Romanian as a foreign language for medical students, and Cosmina Lungoci, lecturer of methodology and didactics, concludes this argument for good quality food, on all its levels: physical, therapeutic, emotional and intellectual. It is the result of a grand reunion of students from over 50 countries and all meridians, of UMFTVB students, and of their lecturers, in an extremely profound cultural exchange: food, a natural synonym for home and the concept of taste, be it innate or cultivated.

Tasting the 12 dishes, reading a volume such as this one, could be a challenge to the reader; it could be a means of reflection; or it could prompt joy in discovering new tastes, in experimenting, in deciding what they like and dislike when it comes to different cultures and foods. One thing is certain, regardless of culture, time and space: appetite comes with eating!

The Coordinator, 2021

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Our deepest thanks to all those who contributed to this volume, which can be considered, in fact, the birth certificate of the **C-CLASC** research centre, *The Centre for Applied Linguistics and Cultural Comparative Studies of Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara*.

Our very special thanks also goes to the *Artship Foundation* and to Professor Slobodan Dan Paich for their constant support and long inspiring collaboration.

I

BEFORE EATING

Reminder:

Mid-January 2021:

Planet Earth

7,799,969,638 inhabitants

around 700 million go to sleep hungry every night (1)

around 345,000 have already died of starvation by mid-January this year
alone (2)

2,800,000 obese people die out annually (3)

HUMAN BEING LIKE A PREY: TO HUNT THE UNKNOWN, WITH FEAR ON THEIR BACKS

GABRIELA-MARIANA LUCA

Motto: "Money is like a sixth sense without which you cannot make a complete use of the other five." W. Somerset Maugham

The human being. The largest unknown of both life and science of all time! We constantly go around in circles around this research subject and, as our questions grow in number, so our vocabulary becomes more and more sophisticated. We enumerate, measure, classify and create terms if we don't have them, all the while simultaneously enlarging an obscure spot. The labels we have set over time not only haven't shed light on ambiguity but have modified the results. Let's not forget that ¼ of the world's population is illiterate, the common denominator of a reading that satisfies the minds of billions of people being, since the beginning, graphic work.

In the last 70,000 years we have developed what is known as history and have attributed that to our species, Homo sapiens. The species, through the building and development of cultures has systematically destroyed its habitat and has, eventually, nested in the feeling it found the most difficult to accept: fear.

Our pages invite reflection on how Homo sapiens feeds on its own fears, raised from the thirst of power and a hunger for wealth. What was the price of the Cognitive Revolution (the remembered beginning), the Agricultural Revolution (12,000 years ago) and the Scientific Revolution (500 years ago)? How has our organism changed because of these excesses or deficits? And what's next?

We will therefore approach "symbols on steroids" (Alter 2013, 88) – money and its individual and social metabolism, in a satiated balance (hungry and sated), developing extensions for interpretation, in the hope of answering, each time with anthropological arguments, a question we find at least slightly bizarre: *Does money, known as the devil's eye in Romania, have any therapeutic value?* More so, how does this define our freedom to

abuse ourselves and our kind, in the most certain way possible while, at the same time, invoking candid things and situations that don't really exist?

The present we are going through, as witnesses of the 2020 pandemic, places us at a crossroads of four semantic fields, with fixed opposite elements: captive-free and money-virtual, radically influencing our mentality of conquerors and profoundly remodelling the concept of relationships and the collective. How will culture, with its plural of cultures, in this context, decide its way forward?

Metaphors of food

Food is the primordial language, as word is the primordial food. To eat means life, sin, offering, joy and knowledge. Just the same, a word can feed, creating satiety, or it can prove truly indigestible, somatising and expressing rejection on all its levels.

“To represent needs in a strict sense”, says Michel Foucault, “means to understand that: language represents thinking just as thinking represents itself. In order to build language or to enrich it from the inside there is no essential and primitive act of significance, but only, in the heart of the representation, that power it holds of representing the self...” (Foucault 1972)

However, *to crave, to prepare, to feed oneself, to share* with others the gift of words and food, be they spiritual or biological, build one of the paths of representation.

Always in a rush, an alert race, pushed all the way to the forgetting of the self, the man of today has come to consider moments of quiet magic, unreal, often tied to a more or less spectacular dinner. To eat, in all cultures, means to share, to communicate, to be a part of a whole, to be in the inner circle, independent of the hierarchy established at the table through the social norms of a place or time.

However, nowadays, *to share* is more a preferred *synonym of to split*. (Luca 2016, 300-310) In some families, diets are so varied that cutting the festive steak or a birthday cake, be it even a symbolic one, do not take place anymore. We are together, but apart.

Medical or philosophical beliefs, couples in which the spouses belong to different cultures, at times fervent practitioners, the ability to travel to the most distant places from home, to live the most daring cultural experiences, the absence of hunger, often modifies the group photograph of those who share a menu.

Through food, a biological dimension blends with a psychological one, but also with a cultural and historical one, forming the necessary frame to obtain all the answers we would need to know ourselves better. Such an approach has been rarely treated in a truly syncretic and constructive way. Micro and macro-specialisations have broken us into small and profound pieces, each analysing from their own point of view, before archiving the file.

Before approaching menus and philosophies of food and language which we feed ourselves as social beings, it would be interesting to follow how we have fed our fear for tomorrow.

Have you ever closely observed the design of our brain? How about the coiling of the small intestine? Why must we feed the mind? Why must we fill our guts? What are words for? What are diets good for if we understand the etymology of the word better (diet “[a]s the art of living”)? (Gillain 2012, 20-22.)

Why must we refrain when our tongues itch to speak, and when our stomachs are growling, or, worse, when the bathroom scales smile bitterly and face us with the promise that...we will begin a new life starting Monday? How is a new company born or how does an undesirable one die at a business lunch, between a couple of glasses of wine and some slices of steak? Why do we grimace in disgust when we dislike people, books, actions, foods, shows, other words? Where is the subtle border between reality and promise? How is man, from the top of the food chain, stepping aggressively on earth, but creating eternal heavens, promising eternal lives to others?

Hunger is the central subject of the path that *Homo sapiens* takes through history, dealt with behind the scenes. Who is *Homo sapiens* in their relationship with tomorrow, with their brain and their belly? How can we behave in a normal manner when we are in fact constantly torn apart between logic, reason and those mad butterflies in the stomach? Some specialists call them emotions, catalogue them and include them in their collections—named, handled and appreciated as such. Numbered, prised, edified.

Carl Linnaeus says that we, human beings, are classed as *Homo Sapiens*, of the *Homo* genus, family *Hominiade*, subfamily *Hominoide*, infraorder *Catarrhini*, suborder *Antropoidae*, order *Primates*, subclass *Eutheria*, class *Mammalia*, superclass *Tetrapoda*, which is a member of the subphylum *Vertebrata*, phylum *Chordata*, of the kingdom *Animalia*, the domain *Eukarya*. (Spencer 2009, 7)

Subsequently, the classification system marked even more bio-details. We consider them scientific proof and we accept them as such, under the amendment that they will be rewritten in light of new scientific discoveries.

Man as a cultural product and producer of culture has become a master artisan of labelling. This is, far from understanding “the content and origin of the product”, although it seems to put our reality in order, leaves us open to worry in a constant struggle between subjective and objective, interpretation extended to the dichotomy: to like—to dislike.

Socially speaking, we will pause over the labels which divide us even today between rich and poor. Let’s flick through some: *to be as poor as a church rat*, *dirt-poor*, *hand-to-mouth*, *penny-pincher*, etc.

The idea that labels change the world is fairly old in specialised literature, writes Alter (2013, 43-77). Around 1930, Benjamin Whorf claimed that words influence the way in which we see the world. Different languages outline different realities. Labels have immense power, they influence not only what we see, but also events which have not taken place yet. The common denominator is their design. A simple glance over them creates a whole world, depending on the viewer.



Figure 1-1 All Saints Church, Hareford, UK, 2019, © Luca GM.

Anato-words

Let's re-memorise some essential aspects of our formative years. The three germ layers are the starting point of any animal and human form. The cells from which the heart and the reproductive cells will form are "extraembryonic". These originate from a part of the egg that generates the "annexes": placenta, membrane, embryonic cord. The cells which will form the base of the ovocytes and sperm originate from the allantois (from the base of the umbilical cord). At first, the heart is located at eye level after which it folds in on itself, transitions through the face and enters the chest. The shape of the aortic cross is a proof of this fold. The initial formation envelops the cardiac and hepatic segments. These will separate as the heart positions itself on the inside (Olivier 2015). In the fourth week, after approximately 28 days, the vitelline duct is made of three layers. During intrauterine life, there are several blood circulations. The essential exchange occurs under the diaphragm, the liver receiving more oxygen than the brain. It is known today that the digestive tract contains hundreds of millions of nervous cells and secretes as many neurotransmitters as the brain (Olivier 2015). More so, the digestive tract secretes the largest quantity of serotonin, the neurotransmitter of safety. This "abdominal brain" which forms during pregnancy influences our entire lives.

Here is why being satiated is synonymous, first of all with a feeling of safety, protection, and wellness. In the Romanian language, *a man of substance* is someone with a certain social status, someone who does not have to worry about tomorrow. A whole semantic field opens here. *To have substance* (quiet as well as richness) or, on the contrary, *not to have substance* (agitated, in a sense and poor in another) define these antagonistic situations.

Have you eaten? is the greeting which Chinese people use for each other (Waley-Cohen 2008, 99-135). This is nothing more than further proof of the essential role that food has in our lives, regardless of where we are. Early texts of Chinese culture structured the course around which society was organised, close attention being paid to the selection and preparation of food. Those who obeyed these rules were considered civilised. The Chinese people have associated early cooking with civilisation. Civilised people were „prepared". Uncivilised people were „raw", „un-prepared". This establishes the difference between those who knew, cultivated and cooked cereals and those who did not use fire to cook (not even meat). This distinction between culture and nature, which clearly tied food practices to the issue of identity, constituted a cultural version of the phrase "you are what you eat" and was kept until the late imperial period, following the

pattern of assimilation of different peoples into the empire depending on their diets. Cooking has always been a Chinese metaphor for governing as it referred back to a daily activity understood by everyone (Waley-Cohen 2008). People eat, regardless of what, where and how much; people feed themselves. Rituals associated cooking and civilisation and placed one of the cooking pots, the three-legged *ding*, in the hierarchy of state symbols. More so, cooking often served as a metaphor on government, therefore culinary talents, largely acknowledged, were seen as an advantage towards obtaining a ministerial post.

Cook Yi Yin, 2000 B.C.E. became the first minister of King Tang, of the Shang dynasty. His exceptional merit comes specifically from the governing principles through which he succeeded in convincing that man is a being capable of self-education, of self-perfecting until they reach the best version of the self possible. The nourishment of the body had been proven to be as important as that of the mind and soul. Through gastronomy and the pleasure of taste, man holds the necessary means to achieve perfection.

Our taste puts us in contact with sapid bodies through mediating a richness of sensations. The maternal breast, the 7 years of home, the Sunday lunch and the places through which we have passed fed our bodies, minds, imaginations. Wishes and impressions about each have been expressed through words. The first civilisation to conceive a language for serving a meal is that of Ancient Egypt, which used the same hieroglyph for *to eat* and *to speak*. The meal is therefore conceived as *language*: if *to eat* means *to speak*, then *to eat* means *to know*.

With the bowl full or with the bowl empty. Money, sym-bolic and dia-bolic

"His character, tastes and dislikes, dreams and ambitions, all will have changed. Gage's body was alive, but inhabited by a new soul." (Damasio 2010, 26)

Both the deeds and terms unfortunately refer back, through our journey through history, to the same societal idol of all times: *money*.

After so many thousands of years, today, more than ever, we call useful and capable those who have "a keen eye for money", and useless, a burden, those who have "given poverty to the devil for free" as an old Romanian proverb says. Giacomo Todeschini (2021, 37), specialist in the history of medieval economics, draws our attention to a very delicate aspect: the clear distinction between voluntary poverty, prized by religion and ordinary poverty, not virtuous, in fact, even condemnable.

The first kings, worried of the fates of their peoples, says Phillipe Ariès (2016), were “feeders and warriors”. Protection materialised on the principle that *gods eat more than humans* both in the construction of holy places as well in terms of offerings.

Not just the types of meat or foods prepared, but also the components of a plant, set at the old tables of Europe, illustrated social hierarchy: roots and bulbs for the menus of the poor, leaves and fruits reserved for the delights of the rich; pork for the poor, lamb, beef, game for the rich.

Far from retracing a history of money and its role in various types of societies, our intention is to highlight the chemistry with which this ancient human invention feeds and processes the states and evolutions of groups of individuals, reaching that, nowadays, to cross the barriers of the physical – banknotes, coins, objects – is to sublimate, again, in the very concept imagined in the night of times. What a spectacular evolution and how many sleepless nights have passed since the first trades of civilisation to bitcoin, the virtual coin of the beginning of the 21st century!

Money is one of the most important symbols of human society. And it is synonymous with power. In his book, *Drunk Tank Pink*, Adam Alter (2013) describes the experiment conducted by the researchers of an important British university through which the fear of being supervised influences individuals (even the most experienced ones, with the most abstract thinking). This is the story: in the common room of a laboratory there was a notice placed above the collection box, next to the coffee machine which asked people to make a donation equivalent to the price of the products they used. The amounts were insignificant (the price of a muffin, a tea or a coffee). Very few took notice of it, the box being almost empty at every weekend. The following week they changed the notice with an image showing a field of flowers. Those few seconds in which people would lift their gaze could be sufficient to encourage them to leave a donation. There were only a few. At the end of the week, there were some donations, but not a satisfactory amount. In the third week, the notice was written over the image of an eye with a piercing gaze. The weekly result, this time, was significant. People are afraid of each other, they are afraid of the image they can create of themselves, they are afraid of the future, in terms of their survival as well as their role/social position. Police used the experiment and placed such posters on the streets. The number of thefts and offences decreased significantly.



Figure 1-2 Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK, 2019, © Luca GM

Of course, the obvious questions which occur after such a result are redundant. Always the same: how did we get here? Who are we and what have we done to the world we live in?

About 70,000 years ago, organisms belonging to the species *Homo sapiens* began to form structures called cultures, as Harari (2017) exceptionally summarises. We will emphasise the second part of his sentence: *some structures called cultures*. The term culture itself encapsulates the story of our species, in a knot, more than metaphorical, between education and hatred. We define the growth and development of these cultures as our history. But who wrote or is still writing history?

History is written by the victors of the time is the answer which an important contemporary Romanian historian, Lucian Boia, would have given; the phrase has been successfully adopted both by specialists and the profane, intensely spread until the dissolution of the source.

The stories of simple people, their days, from the first call of a rooster and to the sunset, with their nights haunted by worries, compose, in fact, living history. Here, anthropological research has a defining role. Man, in all his complexity, with all his bodies, physical and subtle, the product of his own creative force, is the definitive answer. He is both cause and effect.

Society looks exactly as it has been shaped by those who shaped themselves through it.

From a being who would scavenge on the prey of larger predators, man has reached the top of the food chain. Society, itself a food chain, is composed of hunters and hunted, both camps sporting members of the same species. A dual species which destroys its kind and its environment. Projective empathy, as it is called, “enriches in our eyes the wonder of the universe and infiltrates an almost organic vitality which explains the animism of primitive thinking” (Benoist, 1995), overcoming the field of positive metaphor: inhale-exhale. We can trace this back to the night of the being in which *to take* (*to take over, to steal*) and to give (*to offer, to gift*) build the perpetual drama of the species. A beast such as the lion which has reached the top of the food chain, Harari reminds us, did it in the rhythm which the ecosystem, in its totality, had done, (re)balancing itself along the way, upholding the same rhythm.

Man burnt the stages. In his race to the top, he had not given the ecosystem the necessary time to get used to the unusual demands of the winning species. In their race to the top at any cost, *H. sapiens* did not accord the necessary time to observe themselves and their environment in the process. Discovering fire allowed us to cook. Our digestive tract got smaller, our brains got bigger, our posture and abilities have changed. We have become, as Harari has labelled us “a species of cooks” (Harari, 2017).

“Everything is culture, even elements which you thought unworthy of entering this domain, such as hygiene and undergarments, and some you thought purely accidental, for example the distance between those who carry a conversation or a massacre of cats in the 18th century, analysed by Robert Danton. Historical or cultural facts are also facts which seem to always be the same, as feelings (for example, fear or mercy) manifestations which you thought spontaneous and personal (such as the preference for a rare or well done steak) or those considered natural, somatic (for example, pleasures or repulsions)” (Toma, 2001).

This allowed us to think and communicate differently. We bring back the emblematic image of the digestive tract-brain.

All species communicate with each other. The fact that *love goes through the stomach*, metaphorically speaking, brings us closer to the other beings, but something important distinguishes us from them in communication.

Concerning our species, culture is the common denominator through which a member of the group is understood by the others.

Anthropologist Leslie A. White (quoted in Mihăilescu, 2007) insists on the fact that every human behaviour has its origin in the way we use

symbols. Art, religion and money, White says, involve the use of symbols. Images, items, and gestures are all carriers of symbols. Language, in its quality as an item substitute, is the most important carrier of symbols of any culture. Through word humans succeed in transmitting their ideals to the next generation. But not everyone understands things the same or in equal measure.

Language offers us the extraordinary capacity to transmit information which does not exist, which does not have a physical basis. In our materialistic society this has also become a constant worry, as if we are losing control of something we invented: the expression of the imaginary, the promise of imagination. We are constantly talking about palpable evidence in all sciences, especially in medical science. Medicine based on proof is credible medicine which categorically opposes the types of alternative therapy, based on inventions more or less subtle. Religions promise plentiful heavens and ethereal lands of eternal happiness, but here, on earth they build imposing buildings and demand their upkeep through active ritual, rich in goods and foods. As a constant, the symbol of cultural symbols, money is always close; it sustains them, makes them possible.

The famous figurine, the Therianthrope with the head of a lion and body of a man, from Hohlenstein-Stadel, circa 31000 B.C is the first— and perhaps most complex—proof we have that we live between worlds, between the seen and the unseen.

We are the only species which builds its existence on promises, on future projections. This condition of ours (perhaps quality) has brought us, in this form, into the 21st century. However, the scales don't always tip in our favour. We grow in the illusion of our own dreams. We dream of a soulmate, of the day we will be rich, of an ideal partner, of perfect health, of a long and prosperous life, in beliefs conditioned by *ifs* (if I wasn't born in this family/place I would have had the chance to...). The ability to dream is not enough. More so, there are banks of dreams from which we can purchase dreams. Anthropologists Devigneaud and Corbeau have studied this extensively (1979).

In the last 200 years our life has transformed, little by little into a single serving existence. The oxymoron results particularly from this condition: although we are more materialistic than ever, our existence occurs more and more between the virtual and the perishable. It is a short road, historically speaking, from the monogrammed, embroidered silk handkerchief to the single serving paper serviette, to the temples and houses which stood the test of time, to apartment buildings, hybrid and miscellaneous communities, with an estimate lifespan of 100 years, from the printed text to thoughts

thrown into cyberspace. Collective scenarios were born based on these legal fictions.

Something from this archaic memory of the lion-man haunts us still. The desire to be at the top, to be the king, ruler, exists in each of us. We can again draw on the masterly example of Harari (2017): the company Peugeot was born as a family business of Armand Peugeot, in a French village, 300 km away from the Hohlenstein-Stadel cave. Today it is a corporation with thousands of employees and millions of euros. The word *corporation* creates a new anthropological issue. ‘It is almost an irony of the word body (Corpus)’ op. cit. A corporation does not have a body. It is a legal fiction. A concept which makes money. A concept which makes another concept. Imaginary within imaginary.

We also quote here the example of the Romanian national coin: the *leu* (lion). This has its origin in the Dutch florins at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century, which were imprinted with a lion on one side. The emblem of the first Romanian national state, after the unification of the Romanian principalities in 1600, had at its centre a shaded shield with the coat of arms of Moldova—the head of an aurochs held by two crowned anthropomorphic figures, above which stands the Wallachian eagle holding a cross in its beak—bellow the emblem of Transylvania, two front facing lions holding a spade, stepping on seven mountains.

There are countless companies/corporations which have the symbol of a lion on their logos/labels: from the music we listen to, the car we drive, the shower gel for our babies, the restaurants we choose, to different groceries. Here, the irony goes as far as labelling some vegan foods. The lion, the king, is emblematic for all ages and all tastes! To possess such items (money or goods) improves our emotional wellbeing. On the contrary, if we desire these items and cannot have them, then, surely our lives will be miserable. The new solution is a new promise. The contemporary society consumes and once in this gear, it cannot break. Promises do not have an expiry date and are not deposited in a limited stock.

There are companies which have taken into account our unhappiness before it could manifest. For a certain amount, which is also paid by the ‘unfortunate’, the Bummer *corpo(ration)* delivers care packages seasoned with the sadness of the aforementioned. A ‘Bummer basket’ (4) may contain any number of things, from *emergency chocolate, the glasses for the drop of happiness*, to the *partner’s cigarettes, a condom or a one dollar bill*. These companies which create so much pleasure, “subtly keep the attitude of the lion and the softness of big cats”, says Adam Alter (2013).

The human being depends on the structure imagined by the human being. We could however say that an imagined reality is not always a big lie. Nowadays it does not seem to truly matter if money is represented by a debit card, some gold nuggets, some shells, beads or corals. In all cultures, regardless of which, the dominating concept and the results are all that matter.

Despite our futuristic aspirations, we are still human and our DNA still shapes our physical, emotional and cognitive abilities.

We found this graffiti (see Figure 1-3) on the walls of a library in Timisoara; a spontaneous confirmation of the fact that regardless of what we experience, we keep the same hope of a *better*...for which we greet each day as a victory, even when the signature belongs to a teenager with the name of a flower, translated in to the frank language of the present.

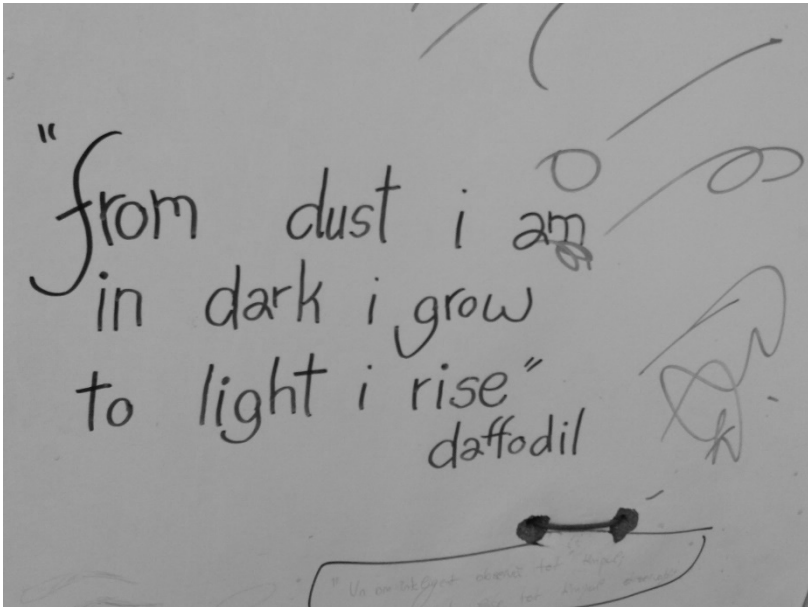


Figure 1-3 Graffiti on a library wall, Timișoara, Romania, 2019, © Luca GM

Without end: now-more-fast!

Anthropologically speaking our species will constantly find itself scared and hungry (a lack of food, emotion, information), far from a middle ground, far from the balance which every generation aspires to.

Some researchers (Rupell Shell 2016) say that we have kept our *hungry gene*: the fear that *tomorrow* we will not find food. The labels which characterise the species fit inside three imperative adverbs: *now-more-fast!*

The sublayer of the problem is the same, it is only the idea we envision on wellbeing/opulence that differs from one culture to the next. Between the youth of the island of Yap in Micronesia, owner of a giant stone coin, and a young Harvard graduate who became a successful businessman on Wall Street, there would not be a substantial difference, states Harari. The issues would only result in the way the two use their power in the social circles of their existence; the way in which the most powerful member of the community sets the tiers for taste and distaste.

Money, an invention which unites and simultaneously separates is the ever-present character, in the open and in the shadows, of the thousands of years of civilisation. Like any other presence (to live with) and any other absence (to live without), it intervenes in the chemistry of each individual, somatising their states of being. It is more than enough to refer back to the state of spirit that paints our success of a promotion interview, payday or, on the contrary, the anguish generated by the lack of money. 30 years have passed since the Irish band KFL decided to throw the 20th century back to the Middle Ages and transformed a million pounds sterling in notes into a camp fire—gained from the sale of a single song (Alter 2013). The pain which many have felt, who are painfully aware of what it's like to make your bread through sweat, has not yet healed. The crackling of the banknotes twisting in the fire, in the Dublin of 1991, recently named cultural capital (we highlight, cultural) wounded all possible senses.

The relationship of our species with money, so emotionally charged, wounds so profoundly that there is no doubt over its status as a source of all the evils throughout history, regardless of the time/times which we refer back to. There are plenty of experiments which exemplify the previous statement (Bazin et al. 2008).

This pain is constantly exploited and shapes the body of civilisation in the same manner as a group of cells which multiply chaotically and which therapy seeks to order. We have named the process, but not the result. The principle is the same: the solution is found in the question. In the same way in which it is a stress factor, yes, money also has a *therapeutic value*.

The Chicago Tribune has promoted in new ways ever since 1986 the (old) idea through studies on therapy by shopping. Publicity is the idol which acts as game master. The contemporary man, encapsulated in a social prison, consumes ('now-a lot-fast!') indebting himself and future generations.

Obesity, the illnesses of civilisation—generated by extremes (abuse, abundancy, absence)—are proof of our mindless haste, of a sudden increase of the adaptation process.

With fear behind us and with a fear of the future we have traversed 70,000 years of promises, at a high price, heading towards an uncertain future, but definitely heading towards an edge of memory. We have exchanged papyrus for mobile phones, with a life/meaning memory larger than any of our own, but relatively short (in 2 to 3 years the gadget is outdated), we have replaced nutrients offered by nature with others we imagined, we create structures which protect us from our own inventions, we make timid efforts in self-knowledge before it is too late and we fall again, almost blindly, in the ‘Mowgli experiment’, forgetting that without any human contact our social muscles atrophy due to the lack of regular training.

Wiping an ephemeral tear with a single serving serviette, let’s see how much knowledge we have gained by working to earn a crust.

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